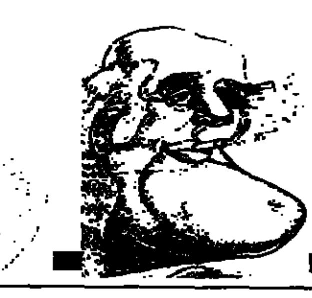
هكذا من الأصل

Al-Ahram Weekly



Mustafa Amin, portrait of the week by Bahgory 2&8

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Feast-eve tragedy

CHANTING and clad in white robes, some two million pilgrims converged on Mount Arafat yesterday, leaving behind, in the plain below, the charred remains of a tent city in Mina, near the holy city of Mecca, that was ravaged by fire on Tuesday.

The blaze, which devastated the camp, was triggered by a cooking gas cylinder and fanned by high winds. Official reports on Wednesday morning said that 217 people had died and 1,290 were injured in the tragedy, but Reuters reported that Indian officials put the death toll at 250, including 150 Indians, and the number of people injured at 2,000.

Witnesses said the fire began around noon and spread quickly as cooking and heating gas bottles exploded in the heat and strong winds fanned the flames over a 25 sq km area, setting some 70,000 tents alight. The fire raged for more than five hours before it was finally put out, despite the efforts of civil defense workers and fire-extinguishing helicopters.

Many pilgrims were injured in the stampede to get out of the burning camps and the region was closed off by the Saudi authorities. Most of the victims were reported to be from India, Pakistan and Bangladesh. They were among two million Muslims from 100 countries gathered for the annual *Hajj* pilgrimage that reached its climax yesterday.

Tents of pilgrims from Egypt, Iran, Lebanon, Yemen, Algeria and Morocco were also hit by the fire, but authorities in these countries reported only minor injuries, as the French news agency AFP reported.

Saudi authorities acted quickly, erecting new tents and launching a clean-up operation yesterday after the fire forced hundreds of pilgrims to spend the night without shelter on the Mina plain.

Saudi television said King Fahd expressed condolences to the families of the victims. He was joined by a chorus of world leaders including President Hosni Mubarak, King Hussein of Jordan and US President Bill Clinton. The EU-Mediterranean officials meeting in the Maltese capital of Valletta also expressed their sorrow.

The fatal blaze is the latest tragedy to strike the pilgrims despite Saudi efforts to safeguard the annual pilgrimage. The worst of recent Mecca tragedies was a stampede in 1990, in which 1,426 pilgrims were crushed to death in a tunnel. In 1994, 270 pilgrims were also killed in a stampede. Three people were killed in 1995 when a fire swept through the tent camps in Mina.

INSIDE



For centuries the departure of the *kiswa* — the cloth used to cover the Ka'ba — from Cairo to Mecca occasioned extended celebrations. Since the time of Shagaret El-Durr, the cloth has traditionally been transported in the *mahmal*, an elaborate, pyramidal structure carried on the back of a camel. The *mahmal* pictured here was sent to Mecca by King Fouad in 1925, continuing an age-old tradition which finally came to an end in 1962. Today, the *kiswa* is manufactured in Saudi Arabia, a 24 square metre black silk cloth lavishly embroidered with gold plated silver threads, at a reputed cost of some 17 million riyals. *(see pp 12&13)*

(photo: courtesy of Maged Farag)

Too late to kickstart?

A flurry of diplomatic activity in Washington, Valletta and regional capitals signalled a fresh bid to break the stalemate in the peace process. **Lamis Andoni** and **Hoda Tawfik** *report from Washington, while in Jerusalem* **Graham Usher** *assesses the mood of Palestinians*

In a surprise change of heart, Yasser Arafat and Israeli Foreign Minister David Levy met in Valletta, Malta, yesterday in a fresh effort to salvage the Middle East peace process. The meeting came after Arab and European diplomats pressured the two to hold the talks during a conference of 27 European and Mediterranean nations.

"We must work in an atmosphere conducive to peace, not with violence or mutual allegations," Levy said.

Arafat's spokesman Marawan Kanafani said both men promised to "go back to the peace process. Hopefully, they will take it forward".

It was the highest level Israeli-Palestinian meeting since the peace process stalled last month following the Israeli decision to continue construction of a Jewish settlement in Arab East Jerusalem. Organisers of the European-Mediterranean partnership conference said the meeting was also attended by the Egyptian, Dutch and French foreign ministers.

Kanafani described the meeting as a "courtesy visit" by Levy to Arafat, adding that "nothing of substance was discussed. However, we consider this a positive, goodwill step."

Kanafani said the mood at the meeting, which included an "exchange of ideas and recommitment to the peace process," was cordial and very warm.

Meanwhile US Middle East peace envoy Dennis Ross was scheduled to meet yesterday in Jerusalem with Binyamin Netanyahu and later with Arafat in Gaza City. But before departing from Washington Ross and US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright met with presidential adviser Osama El-Baz, dispatched to Washington at President Clinton's request to clarify the Egyptian position towards breaking the deadlock. El-Baz, in a statement to *Al-Ahram Weekly*, said that he told the US officials that "President Mubarak welcomes the American role", adding that "Egypt is very much concerned that America's role should succeed and be effective."

As Ross headed back to the region features of any new American initiative remained hazy, though judging by interviews and official statements Washington is keen to see an end to violence and to revive the process of normalisation between Arab governments and Israel.

And while consultations with Israeli and Palestinian leaders in Washington have failed to bridge the gap between the two sides, they have at least laid the basis for a fresh American effort, based on two principles. The first is to get the Palestinian Authority to restrain violent protests against Israel and intensify its clamp-down on the Islamists. The second is to get the Israeli government to refrain from taking "unilateral steps" that could prejudice the outcome of final status negotiations.

Last week in Washington a top-level Palestinian delegation agreed in principle to resume security coordination with Israel and to take measures to "stem violence." However, in return, the delegation, headed by Mahmoud Abbas, Abu Mazen, asked that Israel take similar measures to restrain its soldiers and armed settlers.

The concerns voiced by the Palestinian delegation in meetings with US officials included possible Israeli unilateral actions prejudicial to peace, particularly settlement activities, and a demand to make the implementation of pending interim agreements parallel to final status negotiations which should lead to the implementation of UN Security Council's Resolution 242.

Abu Mazen told the *Weekly* in a telephone interview that the delegation's demands, included in a letter from Arafat to Clinton, were not Palestinian preconditions. "All we are trying to do is reassert the Oslo Accords as the terms of reference for this process," he said.

But for an increasing number of Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza, Oslo remains as far away as ever. Another week of confrontations in Hebron left three Palestinians dead and over 160 injured. The popular mood was reflected in a poll surveying Palestinian attitudes in the cities of Hebron, Bethlehem and Ramallah. Fifty per cent of respondents said they were opposed to negotiations with Israel; 48 per cent supported Palestinian suicide operations while 75 per cent said they were against any PA attempts to arrest Hamas activists.

"The people are moving towards us," said Ibrahim Ghoshah, Hamas spokesman in Jordan. He appears to be right. Despite its relatively low-level participation in the protests, which have been led mainly by Arafat's Fatah movement, Hamas has proved adept at reaping the political dividends. The three Palestinians killed in Hebron were claimed by Hamas as "martyrs," their funerals adorned with more green Islamic flags than Palestinian ones.

On 8 April Hamas' call for a three-day general strike in Hebron was solidly observed by Palestinians, both moderates and Islamists. In a leaflet circulated the same day, Hamas urged national unity but denounced Oslo and, specifically, the PA-Israel Hebron agreement which "sold the city's heart to the Jews". It is a message Arafat and Fatah are having a hard time opposing.

On 7 April the Islamist bloc increased its majority in student elections at Hebron University, winning 19 seats to Fatah's 15. Coming after Islamist victories in elections for the Engineers Association in Gaza and Al-Najah University Staff Association in Nablus, the domestic pressure on Arafat and Fatah is mounting.

Meanwhile, Israel yesterday sealed off the West Bank and banned Palestinian workers from entering the country because of an increased risk of attacks by Islamist militants, an army spokesman said. A statement said the closure was imposed "due to warnings of intentions by terror groups to carry out attacks from the West Bank against Israeli citizens".

Brotherhood backtrack

After alienating public opinion, the outlawed Muslim Brotherhood has retracted a statement made by its supreme guide, Mustafa Mashhour, on the status of Copts under an Islamic state. **Khaled Dawoud** *reports*

Nearly all local human rights groups issued statements of condemnation this week, lambasting Mustafa Mashhour, leader of the outlawed Muslim Brotherhood, for insisting that Copts pay an annual tax, known as *jizya*, if an Islamic state were established in this country. Mashhour, who made the statement in an interview with *Al-Ahram Weekly* (issue 319) also said that Copts should be barred from the army because their loyalty would be questionable if Egypt came under attack from a Christian state.

After nearly a week of silence, during which several newspapers and magazines — including *Rose El-Youssef*, which reproduced the text of the interview in its entirety — published versions of the Mashhour interview, the Brotherhood issued a statement, signed by its supreme guide, retracting what he had said to the *Weekly*. The statement said the group, since its founding in 1928, had always upheld the view that Egyptian Muslims and Christians should enjoy equal rights. The statement was sent to the *Weekly* as a letter-to-the-editor and was also published by *Al-Shaab*, mouthpiece of the Islamist-oriented Labour Party.

Badr Mohamed Badr, a member of the Brotherhood, told the *Weekly* that Mashhour, "like many politicians, has expressed a certain opinion but, after this met with a strong reaction, issued this latest statement of retraction". Badr said the supreme guide's "level of concentration might not have been all it should be, and he did not expect that his statements would be misunderstood to such an extent. Thus, he sought to clarify, correct and deny his opinion in the latest statement he issued."

Badr said the views expressed by Mashhour in the *Weekly* "have always existed in Islamic theology, but we [in the Brotherhood] have never approved such a position."

According to Rifaat El-Said, secretary-general of the leftist Tagammu Party, Mashhour's interview with the *Weekly* angered everyone, including some influential Brotherhood figures. El-Said thought Mashhour would have been forced to sign the retraction against his own will.

"What probably happened was that there were strong protests within the Brotherhood, and they formed a committee which issued the latest statement and forced Mashhour to sign it, despite his objections and insistence that what he said was the correct Islamic stand on Copts," El-Said told the *Weekly*.

El-Said added that issuing contradictory statements "is nothing new in the history of the Brotherhood. But the views expressed by Mashhour in his interview constitute the true position of the Brotherhood," he said.

"I hope that everyone will now agree with what we have repeatedly stated in the past: first, that the Brotherhood is not a moderate group and, second, that terrorism is not limited only to those who pull the trigger but includes those who provide the ideological justifications for such acts. And this is what the Brotherhood has been doing since its establishment," El-Said said. He added that while the Brotherhood lost its credibility long ago, publication of the *Weekly*'s interview exposed the group further "and now everyone can see their true face."

Hisham Mubarak, director of the Centre for Human Rights Legal Aid and an expert on political Islamist groups, agreed with El-Said that the latest Brotherhood statement did not reflect Mashhour's personal views. He added that "the problem with the statement issued in Mashhour's name is that it did not deny or condemn what he said in his earlier interview."

Mubarak said that he was not surprised by what Mashhour said in the interview "because if we read his political writings, we will easily find out that he belongs to that trend in the Brotherhood which does not disapprove of violence as a means of reaching the goal of establishing an Islamic state". Mubarak added he believes that there are different trends within the Brotherhood, ranging from moderation to extremism. "Mashhour is definitely closer to the extremist trend and to those who call for *jihad* [holy war] in order to reach their goal."

El-Said and Mubarak agreed that the interview had caused the Brotherhood "deep embarrassment" just as the group was trying to improve its image, and was facing the strongest government clampdown since President Anwar El-Sadat released its leaders from prison in the mid-1970s.

Meanwhile, a Coptic lawyer, Mamdouh Nakhla, filed a lawsuit against Mashhour, accusing him of libel and slander for questioning the loyalty of Egypt's Copts and labelling them as potential traitors. A Cairo court will begin hearings on 10 May.

Nakhla told the *Weekly* that "as a Copt who performed compulsory military service and whose family lost five members in previous wars against Israel, I felt very humiliated and so decided to file the lawsuit on behalf of all Copts."

Youssef Seidhom, editor-in-chief of *Watani* weekly newspaper, which provides a forum for many Coptic writers, blasted Mashhour in a front page editorial on Sunday. He wrote that Mashhour's statements to the *Weekly* "removed the mask which the Muslim Brotherhood has long donned, clearly exposing their programme, plans and intentions for Egypt."

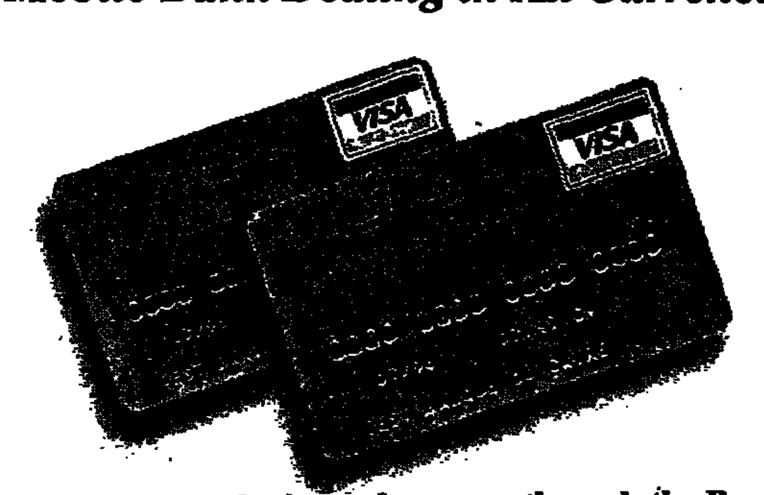
"Now, it is time to stop and ask," Seidhom added, "just who is slaughtering Egypt and who is gambling with its future?"

(for full text of Mashhour's letter to Al-Ahram Weekly, *and the relevant section of the interview, see p.2)*



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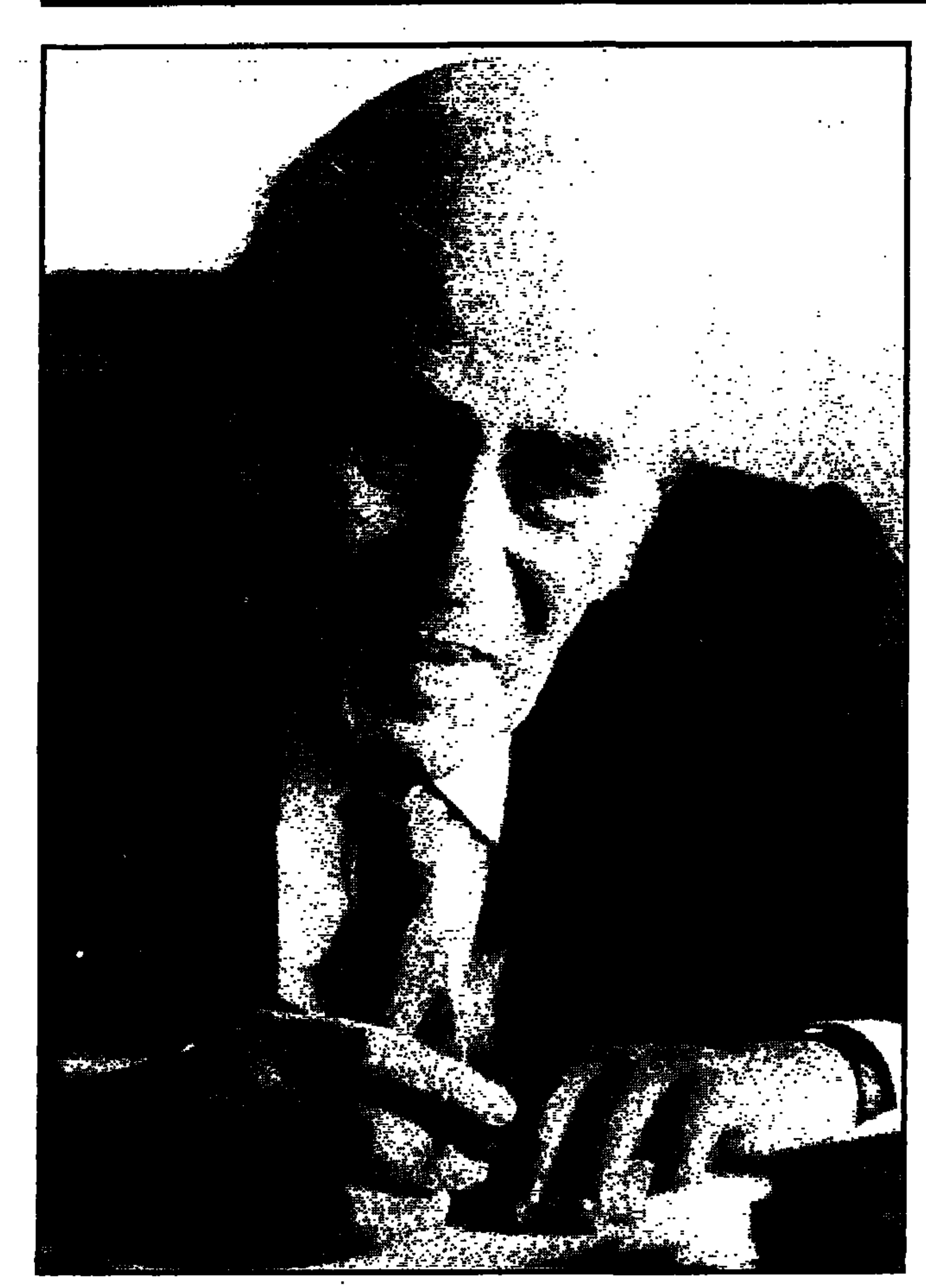
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Obituary

Mustafa Amin: A symbol of freedom

He was variously described as quintessential journalist, grand old man of journalism, pioneer of modern journalism and journalist par excellence. And the hype was unfailingly true.

Mustafa Amin and his twin brother, Ali, were born on 21 February 1914 at the home of their maternal grand-uncle, Saad Zaghloul, national leader and former prime minister.

In 1931, Mustafa Amin became deputy chief editor of the weekly magazine *Rose El-Youssef*. Three years later, he was appointed deputy chief editor of another weekly magazine, *Akher Saa*.

The twins then took the daring step of founding their own paper. *Akhbar El-Yom*, a hard-hitting, though, some argue, sensationalist, weekly newspaper, appeared on 11 February 1944. The style was revolutionary. Lengthy articles were replaced by bold, crisp, capsulised stories under daring headlines, and a more modern concept of investigative reporting was launched. In 1952, they published the mass circulation *Al-Akhbar*, a daily newspaper.

Mustafa and Ali were known for scouting out for young talent. Many a prominent journalist had his successful career launched by the twins.

Both twins were vigorous reporters. But Mustafa was the one known for his ruthless pursuit of stories. Anecdotes abound of him switching bags on planes in order to obtain confidential papers and reading, upside-down, sensitive documents on the desks of unsuspecting officials.

In 1965, Mustafa Amin was indicted on charges of spying for the United States and sent to prison under a 25-year sentence. He pleaded that he had been acting under direct orders from President Gamal Abdel-Nasser to obtain information from an American diplomat. In 1974, he was released from jail on medical grounds by Nasser's successor, President Anwar El-Sadat.

Noting that younger generations held Amin in great respect, journalist Salama Ahmed Salama said: "The story of espionage seems to have never carried much weight with them."

Following Ali Amin's death in 1976, Mustafa took over his daily column "A thought" which appeared on the backpage of *Al-Akhbar*, and infused it with his own brand of humanitarianism coupled with an unrelenting quest for democracy.

To the last, Mustafa Amin maintained his savvy of the public mood on issues ranging from education to the complaints of taxpayers. "A thought" was brief, light and, for all its innate humanism, scathingly critical. "The older he got, the more outspoken he became," Salama said.

There has always been a philanthropic streak in Amin's work. He set aside a charity page in *Akhbar El-Yom* called *"Lailat Al-Qadr."* Through it, millions of pounds were solicited and channeled for good deeds, such as medical help and tuition fees to the needy.

Mustafa weathered two severe blows following his release from prison. One was the death of Ali in 1976 and the other was the loss of his daughter, Ratiba, in 1990.

"Mustafa Amin might have been the quintessential journalist, doing everything for a scoop, when he was young," said writer Louis Greiss. "But for him, freedom was a two-way street. He stood for the freedom of all journalists, whatever their convictions, to speak their mind."

President Hosni Mubarak, in a cable of condolences to Ibrahim Nafie, chairman of the Press Syndicate, said that Amin "made contributions to developing the Egyptian press and coaching a generation of journalists who enriched Egyptian and Arab journalism."

The Press Syndicate's council, in a statement, described Amin as a "symbol of freedom who defended the people's right to liberty."

Amin was taken to hospital three months ago, suffering from pneumonia. He returned home only a few days before his death. His funeral started out at the offices of *Akhbar El-Yom* — in line with his last wish.

He is survived by his widow, Isis Tantawi, and a daughter, Safeya.

Aziza Sami and **Ghada Ragab**

What 'confusions'?

A letter to *Al-Ahram Weekly* from Mustafa Mashhour, the supreme guide of the Muslim Brotherhood, used vague language to retract statements he made in an interview published in this paper two weeks ago. While not claiming to have been misquoted, Mashhour said the published interview had created "certain confusions" regarding his group's position on the rights of Egypt's Copts under an Islamic government. Below, is the full text of his letter, addressed to Khaled Dawoud, the reporter who conducted the interview, of which a copy was also sent to the *Weekly's* editor-in-chief. Unable to discover the source of the "confusions", we also re-publish the text of the relevant section of the interview, this time including the questions posed by our reporter

Text of Mashhour's letter:

"We met for a conversation about the position of the Muslim Brotherhood on a number of questions. I have read what you published in this connection in *Al-Ahram Weekly* and found that there are certain confusions which I should clear away and explain, on the basis of facts, fundamentals and the ethical code of the Muslim Brotherhood. Therefore, I decided to write to you to provide a clear-cut picture of the position taken by the Brotherhood since its establishment. Accordingly, I state the following:

"First. The established view is that the interpretation of the Holy Qur'anic verse contained in the chapter entitled Repentance (*Surat Al-Toba*) is that it refers to those who fought Islam and Muslims. Our Coptic brother citizens fall outside this framework completely. For many successive generations, all the people of Egypt have lived together as equal citizens who share the same rights and duties. They fought together with us against the enemies of the homeland, regardless of the religious creed of the Egyptian defending his homeland, on the one hand, and the [creed of the] invading enemy committing aggression against the homeland.

"Second. The fact that Muslims are fighting in defence of their religious belief necessarily means that they are defending their homeland. Hence, defending the homeland is dictated by Islam. A non-Muslim citizen defending his Egyptian homeland is sharing the same principle with Muslim citizens. There is no room for discrimination. The Muslim Brotherhood issued a clear text in this connection as part of the national consensus plan which they had proposed. In the second point of this document, the Brotherhood said that it does not preoccupy itself with branding anybody as infidel and that we accept people in the way they project themselves because we are propagators [of Islam] and not judges.

We reaffirmed our well-known and unchanging position on our Coptic brothers: that they are brothers and partners in the struggle to rid our homeland of foreign imperialism. Consequently, they have full citizenship rights, both material and moral. In other words, they and we have the same rights and the same duties.

"In this statement, we included the following points:

— freedom of belief.

— freedom of conducting religious rites for all revealed and recognised religions.

— freedom of expression and peaceful propagation of views within the framework of public order and morals and the accepted basic axioms...

— previous statements made by the successive leaders of the Brotherhood that the sons of the homeland, both Muslim and Christian, are citizens who have equal rights and duties, particularly the right to hold public posts and the right to take part in elections, whether by voting or running for election or occupying parliamentary seats.

"The Muslim Brotherhood, which affirmed these principles in their code of ethics from the time of its founding in 1928 until today, has condemned, and continue to condemn, any aggression on any segment of the sons of this homeland or any infringement of their rights and affirms that these principles are based on their interpretation of the Qur'an and the *Sunna* and their commitment to the *Shari'a* of God Almighty."

Text of relevant section of the interview:

The statements made by the supreme guide were, however, in clear contradiction with the views he expressed in the interview. The following textual translation of the relevant remarks should make this clear:

Weekly: You have said that the application of Islamic *Shari'a* is demanded by everybody, including Copts, because it guarantees their full rights. But how can they have full rights if they are barred from the army on the pretext that they do not believe in God's word which Muslims uphold. Isn't this your way of interpreting *Shari'a*?

Mashhour: Of course, this is *Shari'a*. The army is the force of the state and, consequently, it should only include those who embrace the same religious creed, and not any other creeds. This is necessary if they are to take the correct stand against any enemy who tries to commit aggression on the Islamic state. Should the army include non-Islamic elements, and then a Christian state commits aggression on the Islamic state, whose army includes Christian elements, then those elements may collaborate with the enemy and facilitate [its task of] defeating us.

The *jizya* is simply a tax [that is imposed in return] for defending them, defending the Christians. Instead of their defending themselves, Muslims will defend them and will collect the *jizya* in return for this. And yet, if there is a Christian who cannot afford the payment of the *jizya*, the [Islamic] state will give him the money, which is what used to happen in the past.

Weekly: I assure you that the majority of Christians will reject this position because it violates the simplest principles of full citizenship as we understand it.

Mashhour: This is a wrong understanding.

Weekly: But now we are living in modern times. It is possible that a Christian state will mount aggression on us and, out of a sense of belonging to the homeland, I will oppose this state, regardless of whether I am Muslim or Christian.

Mashhour: I, together with Hamed Abul-Nasr, sat down with Pope Shenoudah, who told us that when the Muslims came to Egypt, they saved the Copts from the injustice of the Romans, that the Christians have lived in Egypt and showed cooperation, in many situations, in defending Egypt, that they consider Egypt their homeland, and that there are no problems. But when some rash youths, under certain circumstances and pressures, hit at the Christians, some people may think that Islam is against Copts and is responsible for killing Copts. No, never. Islam orders us to be good to Christians and to deal with them justly, not to fight them. But these rash young men, whose actions we do not approve, do injustice to Islam by making it appear as if it were against Copts.

Weekly: But what about citizenship rights. The simplest of these rights means equality before the law in everything, including membership of the army and all state institutions. What you said casts doubt on the patriotism of Christians... although Muslims and Christians have fought against the British and Israel, and nobody could accuse Copts of collaborating with the enemy.

Mashhour: We do not object to [Copts] being in the People's Assembly. But the principal positions, such as defending the homeland, require that the army of a Muslim state, that protects and propagates Islam, should be made up of Muslims exclusively. But it is possible that they are allowed to occupy non-leading positions in the army. In other words, if they are to be exempt from the payment of the *jizya*, they may be allowed to defend [the homeland], but in non-leading positions.

A cathedral in Abbasiya

The ideas propagated by Mustafa Mashhour may seem like a bad joke to some. Others could consider them contemptible. But some of the views expressed by the Muslim Brotherhood leader have already claimed victims — not only among Copts, whom Mashhour argues should be treated like second-class citizens, but also among the Muslims who buy into this world-view.

On the morning the interview with Mustafa Mashhour appeared in *Al-Ahram Weekly*, I got into a taxi and headed to the Coptic Cathedral in Abbasiya to attend a memorial service for the mother of a colleague. Luckily enough, the first taxi I waved down stopped. When I told the driver of my destination after getting into the front seat, he glanced at me warily and asked: "Cathedral? What cathedral? Is there a cathedral in Abbasiya?" At first, I thought he was pulling my leg: a popular joke among many Cairene taxi drivers, when you tell them that you want to go to the Television Building downtown, is: "Do you want Channel 1 or Channel 2?" But this driver persisted: "I do not know of any church." Still, he took the right direction to Abbasiya. I was soon convinced that I was riding with one of Mashhour's followers, whose faculties of independent thought have been replaced by the Brotherhood's views on Copts, and how they should be treated as second class citizens simply because they belong to a different faith.

The vast majority of Egyptians do not condone Mashhour's views, and those who need convincing can observe the way Muslim peasants react when Islamist militants attack Christians in Upper Egypt. In Abu Qurqas, Naga Hamadi and Ezbet El-Aqbat in Assiut, Muslim peasants queued up to donate blood to their Christian neighbours; the physical and symbolic mixing of their blood confirmed that a strong unity exists between Muslims and Christians in Egypt. This basic sense of solidarity among inhabitants of the same village or the same neighbourhood cannot be weakened, by Mashhour or by narrow-minded people like my taxi driver.

The driver turned up the sound of his car stereo, playing verses from the Qur'an read by a Saudi sheikh in Mecca, and then moved on to his next strategy. "What is your name?" he asked — a not-too-subtle bid to discover my religion. I decided to take part in the ironic game. I told him my first name, which is most frequently used by Muslims, but not unambiguous enough for the driver. I knew he would ask for family names, hopefully expecting Mohamed, Ahmed, Mustafa or any other Muslim name which would give him an opportunity to let off steam and express his antagonism towards Christians without committing a major faux pas. But he was unfortunate: none of my family names permitted a final judgment. Only a few metres before the cathedral, afraid that the driver (too busy scrutinising my face for revealing signs to look at the busy road) would land me in hospital and not at my original destination, I told him that I was Muslim. I immediately followed my confession with a brief lecture, reprimanding him for his behaviour, and insisting that there are no differences between Muslims and Christians since we are all Egyptians. I also repeated the rest of the slogans we know by heart and always read following each massacre of Christians: "the importance of maintaining unity among the two elements of the nation", and "Long live the crescent and the cross". But the driver was not even listening. He was overjoyed, patting me on the back and beaming, while repeating non-stop: "Why didn't you tell me before? I thought you were one of them. If I were you, I would never visit their churches or even talk to them."

This taxi driver is apparently not the only victim of the Brotherhood's poisonous views on Copts. According to reports released by the Shura Council, a whole generation of students may have been influenced by the sectarian views expressed by their extremist teachers. Most of these teachers were removed by Education Minister Hussein Kamel Bahaeddin, and now at least 1,000 teachers are being sent abroad each year to study the latest in educational methods.

For the past two decades, ever since the outlawed Brotherhood was given the green light on political activism in the mid-seventies, the group's message has been that Egypt is an Islamic country; non-Muslims, by definition, are second-class citizens and must tolerate segregation and racism, allegedly in the name of religion. In his interview with the *Weekly*, Mashhour said that, despite government repression, the Brotherhood will continue to teach these beliefs in schools, sports clubs, hospitals, syndicates and through any other legal channels. If the beliefs expressed by Mashhour are anything to go by, it seems natural that the taxi driver and many other young Egyptians have grown up with such hostility towards Christians. According to Mashhour, Christians should not join the army because their loyalty would be in question since they belong to a different faith; in the same breath, he insists that this interpretation of Islam guarantees Christians equal citizenship rights. Although this type of inconsistency does not seem problematic to its propagator, surely it is difficult for such absurd anachronisms to prevail.

Today, Egyptians are trying to take a few steps forward. But there are those who would drag us back hundreds of years.

Khaled Dawoud

CLASS ADS

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Heritage under the sea

Hala Halim reports on an Alexandria workshop and efforts to salvage the city's submerged sites

Setting camp last summer for their excavation of a 17th century shipwreck in the Red Sea, archaeologists from the Institute of Nautical Archaeology (INA) and the Supreme Council of Antiquities (SCA) uncovered a cache of porcelain plates which looters had lifted from the wreck and temporarily buried on shore. Last month in Alexandria, the SCA intervened barely in time to prevent the dumping of concrete blocks into the waters to the east of Silsileh (ancient Cape Lochias, site of the Ptolemaic royal quarter) atop submerged relics. Sewage pumped into the Eastern Harbour and around Qait Bey Fort (the Pharos site) has taken its toll on underwater artefacts and caused archaeologists considerable health problems.

In seeking to address the salvage and protection of underwater sites as top priority, an "International Workshop on Submarine Archaeology & Coastal Management" held in Alexandria from 7 to 11 April, was, fittingly, multi-disciplinary and cross-sectorial. It was co-sponsored by Alexandria University and UNESCO with the SCA. Its task entailed resolving the conflicting interests and lack of communication between diverse authorities.

Among some 40 papers read at the workshop, several contributions were on Alexandrian history and historiography. In a talk on Alexandria's two harbours as shown on maps from the 14th to the 19th century, Harry Tzalas demonstrated that the earliest were fanciful and distorted copies and contrasted these maps with the painstaking accuracy of an unpublished map made in 1603 by a spy working for the reign of the Two Sicilies for the purposes of an attack on Alexandria. Professor of oceanography Selim Morcos, known for his many publications on Alexandrian underwater archaeology, charted pioneering discoveries of submerged sites. In his homage to the late Alexandrian diver and discoverer Kamel Abul-Saadat, Morcos showed unpublished sketches the diver had made of artefacts submerged off Silsileh Promontory and Qait Bey Fort.

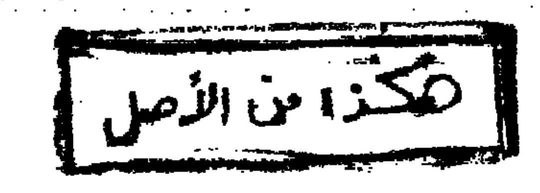
The head of the French-Egyptian mission working on the Pharos site off Qait Bey Fort since 1994, Professor Jean-Yves Empereur, argued that the colossal size and linear orientation of some 20 granite blocks indicated that they once formed part of the masonry of the lighthouse and had toppled with an earthquake (as historical records suggest). More recently, Empereur disclosed, the team had been surveying further in the site amphorae and anchors thought to have come from shipwrecks dating between the 4th century BC and the 7th AD. The associated questions of an environmentally sound protection of the Qait Bey Fort (a breakwater of concrete blocks presently sits atop the submerged antiquities) and establishing an underwater museum in the Pharos site were broached in several papers. Denis Aelbrecht from Electricité de France presented computer simulations of possible scenarios while Alfy Fanous and Omran El-Sayed from the Coastal Research Institute proposed a "continuous detached breakwater" at a distance from the site, thus allowing for the underwater museum and adequate protection for the fort.

Reporting on the results of the French-Egyptian cartographic mission in the Eastern Harbour, Franck Goddio showed the maps yielded by the survey outlining the man-made Ptolemaic Royal Harbour as well as a peninsula, thought to be the Poseidium and an island identified by the team as Antirrhodos, where a Ptolemaic palace stood. Results of other underwater excavations elsewhere in the Mediterranean were also aired here.

The workshop's recommendations addressed both the urgent issue of Qait Bey Fort and long-term policy questions. Taking the Qait Bey Fort/Pharos site as a "pilot project", the workshop proposed that the dumping of concrete blocks be put on hold while archaeologists complete their excavation and that a UNESCO coordinated team of experts assess the threat of erosion to the monument and implement — with the relevant ministerial and academic bodies — "a long-term and lasting solution which to the greatest extent possible maintains the integrity of both cultural heritage sites".

Along the same lines, the long-term management plan, stipulated as a priority that all actions environmentally detrimental to the coastal heritage inside or outside the Eastern Harbour (such as the placement of blocks and discharging of sewage) be stopped until full surveys and sound solutions are presented. Legislatively, it was suggested that the SCA "be included as one of the responsible agencies concerned with the protection of the water environment." A more ambitious recommendation was that "the possibility of establishing a special legal status for the underwater archaeological sites of Alexandria be studied." The long-proposed idea of turning some of the submerged sites into archaeological parks was also to be examined for its potential economic value.

But workshop recommendations, comprehensive and far-sighted as they may be, are not always put into practice. Hence the final recommendation that "a small group be established to follow up the recommendations of this workshop, to write project proposals and investigate funding possibilities."



هكذا من الأصل



A plea for tolerance

Tolerance, says Egypt's first lady, is a commitment to the full acceptance of those who are different from us, learning from them and sharing knowledge with them — and it should be adopted by us all

BolognaFiere

photos: Mohamed Hassan

At a UNESCO event organised as part of Italy's Bologna Children's Book Fair, Mrs Suzanne Mubarak presided over an international jury judging the "UNESCO Prize for Children's and Young People's Literature in the Service of Tolerance," reports **Magda Mehanna**.

The jury examined about 600 entries submitted by writers from 70 countries in 50 languages. Prizes amounting to $8,000 were awarded to two entries from various age groups.

Addressing the gathering, Mrs Mubarak said that UNESCO had not expected to receive such a large number of entries. "But the fact that it did proves to us that despite all the problems due to intolerance that exist in the world today, or perhaps I should say because of these problems, more and more writers and publishers are trying to sow the seeds of tolerance in the hearts and minds of children," she said. "By speaking to children, they are speaking to the future, and what better future could we hope for than one of tolerance, harmony and peace."

Mrs Mubarak said the jury was confronted with the problem of defining tolerance. To explain the definition that was agreed upon, she said that tolerance "comes in all colours, shapes and sizes. Tolerance is not being indulgent towards others, it is a commitment to full acceptance of those different from us, different in their physical appearance, in their cultural practices, in their religious beliefs and in their way of life. It also means learning from others and, at the same time, sharing what we know with them," she said.

No seed of tolerance is too small or insignificant, "and if the prize helps in disseminating just a few more of those seeds, then we have reason to be satisfied," Mrs Mubarak added.

She reminded her audience that "as someone who has worked for many years to provide children in my country with access to books through schools and public libraries, I am particularly aware of the importance of books in building cultural bridges across frontiers. In Egypt, we are also active in developing centres where ordinary schoolchildren can be exposed to other cultures," she said.

In conclusion, Mrs Mubarak stressed "that the responsibility of promoting tolerance, in all its aspects, is one that falls squarely on our shoulders, all of us, as publishers, parents, editors and educators who have each been allotted a sacred duty in helping to shape the minds of future generations. Let us strive to fulfil our duty as best as we can," she said.

The next prize will be awarded at Bologna in 1999. The deadline for submitting entries is the end of this year.

Turkish visit

TURKEY'S President Suleiman Demirel will arrive in Cairo for a one-day visit on 28 April to hold talks with President Hosni Mubarak on bilateral relations and prospects for the Middle East peace process.

Foreign Minister Amr Moussa said that Cairo is looking forward to receiving Demirel, whom he described as one of the "pivotal personalities in the region". Moussa said that in light of recent developments and increased Turkish-Israeli military cooperation, "we want to know whether these actions negatively affect Turkish-Arab relations". He added that Turkey's relations with its Arab neighbours should once again take prominence, as they had in the past.

Ankara's military training agreement with Tel Aviv last year came under heavy criticism by Arab countries, especially Syria, which felt threatened by Israel's use of Turkish airspace.

Somali worries

DURING talks with President Hosni Mubarak last Monday, Somali faction leader Hussein Mohamed Aidid urged the Egyptian leader to help his country return to the Arab and African fold. Their discussions also dealt with ways of rebuilding Somalia and the reconciliation efforts under way in the country.

"We hope that our [Egyptian] brothers will undertake the initiative to help us on the international scene until we return to the Arab and international fold," Aidid told reporters after the 60-minute meeting. He also asked for Egypt's "moral and regional assistance" in restoring stability in Somalia and patching up ties with its neighbours.

Somalia, a member of the 22-nation Arab League, has been torn apart by the civil war which began in 1991 after the fall of President Mohamed Siad Barre. The Somali National Salvation Council was established last January by 26 warring factions in Somalia — but Aidid refused to join.

Aidid, the self-proclaimed "president" of Somalia, also met with Arab League Secretary-General Esmat Abdel-Meguid, who put forward an "Arab plan" aimed at forming a Somali national unity government. Abdel-Meguid urged Aidid to make peace with the other factions, saying that the Arab League was willing to act as mediator.

Museum damaged

DESPITE denials by officials of the Supreme Council of Antiquities (SCA), priceless artifacts at the downtown Islamic Museum could have been damaged by water leaking from a faulty plumbing system, reports **Nevine El-Aref**.

According to Essam Abul-Ela, prosecutor for El-Muski district who made an inspection tour of the museum at Bab El-Khalq Square, the leakage resulted from poor maintenance of the plumbing system and blocked drainage pipes. Abul-Ela said that artifacts stored in the museum's basement — two tapestries and unique and priceless wooden items on display at the museum's 17th hall on the second floor — were also harmed.

But according to SCA officials, the leakage only affected the walls of the 17th hall which is used for lectures and cultural activities. Two Iranian tapestries, dating back to the 19th century and displayed in this hall, suffered minor damage, and were being restored, the officials said. The items stored in the basement survived unscathed, the officials added.

Two committees from the Ministry of Culture and the Abdin district have been established to examine the extent of the damage.

War movies

WITH a multi-million pound budget and an all-star cast, preparations are underway for the production of two films about the 1968-69 war of attrition and the 1973 October War, reports **Rana Allam**. According to Mohamed Radi, who will direct the two movies, the first, *Ha'et El-Boutoulat* (Valour Wall), deals with the establishment in 1969 of the Air Defence Forces to confront Israeli air force attacks against the Egyptian hinterland. The "wall" in the film refers to the Egyptian surface-to-air missiles which proved deadly to the attacking Israeli warplanes.

Field Marshal Mohamed Ali Fahmi, the first commander of the air defence forces, will examine the film's script, which was prepared by a group of writers. "The film is a documentary, with a small dramatic part," Fahmi said.

Produced by Egyptian Television, which earmarked a LE17 million budget, and the armed forces, which will provide the military equipment, the film stars Farouk El-Fishawi, Jihan Nasr, El-Sayed Radi, Wael Nour and others.

The second film, *Ayam El-Magd* (Days of Glory), is more of a drama than a documentary. Its story begins on the 4 October, two days before the outbreak of the 1973 War, and ends with the liberation of a major part of the Sinai Desert. "The film tackles the social aspect of the war through several stories of people who left their homes to take part in the fighting," said Adel Hosni, who is producing the film in cooperation with Egyptian Television. The war scenes in the film will not exceed 33 minutes, with the remainder of the two-hour duration devoted to the social and psychological reactions of the protagonists.

The film's budget is set at LE15 million, the script was written by Magid Tobia and the stars include Kamal El-Shennawi, Hussein Fahmi, Farouk El-Fishawi, Raghda, Nour El-Sherif and Mahmoud Hmeida.

The two films will be shot on location in Cairo, Suez and the Sinai.

Opposition angry over meagre harvest

Opposition parties are bitter about the results of the recent municipal elections, in which the NDP swept to a landslide victory. Amira Howeidy reports

Opposition parties charged this week that the ruling National Democratic Party (NDP) committed various violations in the 7 April local council elections to ensure a sweeping victory. An NDP spokesman, in an interview with *Al-Ahram Weekly*, conceded that the poll had witnessed irregularities, but vehemently denied that these were committed by state bodies or reflected a government policy. He charged that attempts to unduly influence the poll had been made by candidates from all parties, as well as by independents.

Although the final, official tally has not been announced yet, NDP officials said the ruling party won approximately 95 per cent of 47,382 local [municipal] council seats in villages, city districts, cities and governorates.

According to Local Administration Minister Mahmoud Sherif, opposition parties, which fielded about 7,000 candidates, won 86 seats only. But the opposition parties estimated their gains at about 200 seats. The Islamist-oriented Labour Party of Ibrahim Shukri said it won 20 seats, the Democratic Nasserist Party of Diaeddin Dawoud said it gained 43, and Khaled Mohieddin's leftist Tagammu Party said it garnered 125.

Independents won 1,662 seats. The fate of 1,322 seats will be decided in a run-off second round that is expected to be held after the *Eid Al-Adha* (feast of sacrifice) holiday, which began yesterday.

Angered by the alleged violations committed by the NDP, the Nasserist Party filed a lawsuit with an administrative court, demanding that the election results be annuled, and threatened to boycott future elections until additional safeguards are provided. The Labour Party, for its part, will hold a series of meetings following the holiday to decide on how to "respond to the outcome of the elections," said Labour's electoral coordinator, Abdel-Hamid Barakat.

The election watch committees of the Egyptian Organisation for Human Rights (EOHR) and the Centre for Human Rights Legal Aid (CHRLA), allege that the NDP "showed no consideration for rules or guarantees to ensure proper voting and respect for the will of voters."

The Committee for Coordination between the Professional Syndicates, which has Islamist sympathies, demanded that new elections be held following the annulment of the results of the recent ballot. The committee issued a statement, appealing to President Hosni Mubarak to order an investigation of "the practices of the employees and officials of the local administration ministry who claimed they were only carrying out orders."

Opposition parties said that many of their candidates and their supporters were arrested on the eve of, or during, the elections. Some candidates said they were pressured to withdraw in favour of NDP nominees. They also took issue with the lists of voters and complained that some balloting stations were shut down early, ahead of official closing time.

Responding to these accusations, Abdel-Fattah El-Dali, head of the NDP's local and administrative committee, said that given the large number of candidates and contested seats, the elections were bound to be "chaotic." "About 57,000 candidates were competing, more than one million voters cast ballots, voters had to choose at least 10 members for each council. So, what do you expect?" El-Dali told *Al-Ahram Weekly*.

The violations, he said, were committed not only by NDP candidates but also by opposition parties. The Badrashein district in the Governorate of Giza is a case in point, he said. "In this district, one half of the NDP's list was removed from the polling station [walls] by the independents running against them," El-Dali said.

He conceded that the complaints of the opposition parties were "not exaggerated" but denied that the irregularities were a policy dictated by the government or the security forces.

Asked about the arrest of some opposition candidates or their representatives, El-Dali said that on election day, many polling stations were crammed with candidates and their supporters. A polling station, he said, would be crowded with as many as 40 people, who are not voters. "It was natural, therefore, for security forces to intervene," El-Dali added.

Market challenges party paper

Torn between considerations of quality journalism, the pull of sensationalism, and the party line, the opposition press keeps changing faces. Fatemah Farag looks at the new *Al-Arabi*

Al-Arabi, the weekly newspaper of Diaeddin Dawoud's Democratic Nasserist Party, surprised its readers recently with some radical changes, the most evident of which was the new colour of the front page — brown.

The opinion and foreign news pages were cancelled and new pages were added, with titles such as "the Zionist enemy" and "excuse me" — the latter devoted to responding to the party's critics. Moreover, the newspaper now hits the newsstands on Sunday, instead of Monday.

What happened? The newspaper has a new editor-in-chief, Abdallah Imam, who replaced Mahmoud El-Maraghi three months ago. Imam, a staunch Nasserist and the author of 25 books on Gamal Abdel-Nasser and Nasserism, belongs to the *Rose El-Youssef* school of journalism. After working for that weekly magazine for over 40 years, he came to *Al-Arabi* with a "new vision."

"It is only natural that you get a change in form with the change of the editor-in-chief," said Imam as he settled back in a chair at the coffee-shop of a luxury hotel and gazed at the Nile. "I have a different vision. I think the newspaper should devote greater space to Nasserist ideas and to responding to Nasserism's critics. I also believe it should be forceful in reflecting the party's line and have a clear Arab policy as well as a clear stand in opposing the Zionist enemy."

However, critics see things differently. "The newspaper is better as far as layout goes," said Amin Iskandar, a Nasserist party dissenter. "But as far as content goes, it does not address today's problems and does not come up with anything new."

Iskandar was equally critical of the "old" *Al-Arabi*. "Under Maraghi, the newspaper was sheepish. I mean it had a very low voice and this reflected the nature of the party. This is why circulation dropped from 104,000 to 12,000 and then to 8,000, shortly before Maraghi left."

So, a part of Imam's "new vision" is to make the newspaper more competitive. Although he claimed that Maraghi left because he became "tired of administrative duties," it is an open secret that the newspaper is in financial straits.

Imam claimed that since his takeover, circulation rose by 50 per cent, but Iskandar put a damper on this success claim. "So, how many is he distributing?... Let's say 20,000... Well, when a newspaper that was distributing over 100,000 is down to 20,000, then it is a shame. And when newspapers like *Al-Destour* and *Al-Osbou* distribute over 100,000, then you are in bad shape."

Critics of *Al-Arabi*'s "new face" claim that in order to become more competitive, the newspaper has become more sensational and less political. The argument they are putting forward is that in order to survive in a market that has new newspapers such as *Al-Destour*, *Al-Arabi* had to don a sensationalist attire. To prove their point, they cite titles like "Anis Mansour, you are a liar" and "Take-away marriage" and "five-star divorces" as well as the removal of the opinion page.

An impartial observer comparing the new *Al-Arabi* with the old will immediately detect a switch from analytical pieces to shorter articles.

But Iskandar used even harsher words. "The emphasis is on memories, such as interviews with Zakaria Mohieddin, and our old problems with the opponents of Nasserism. Of course, I have respect for Mohieddin and I have differences with the same people, but I do not think that these are the problems of Egypt today," he said.

The removal of the opinion page is another issue. Imam claims that he has broken down the opinion page into smaller pieces and dispersed them all over the newspaper. "I have divided the opinion pieces by subject, instead of having them all on one page... Now I have 15 opinion writers... Also I had people condense their pieces into small boxes or columns. I don't think that readers are interested in long articles." However, others feel that this policy has reduced the political sophistication of the newspaper.

Another change has been the emphasis on party news. Not only was a new page added, devoted to news of the party, but also the front page headlines are party-dominated. "The Nasserist Party presents the issues of housing and agricultural land rent at a meeting with the prime minister" and "the Nasserist Party defends Jerusalem" are two examples.

Imam defended the change by saying that this is the newspaper's role. "We are a party newspaper and so we should cover the news of the party," he said. But Iskandar disagreed: "This is a very traditional approach. A party will feel that this is its newspaper when the newspaper covers the issues which concern the people whom the party is defending, not when the newspaper prints pictures of party members."

Al-Arabi is not the only opposition newspaper to run into trouble. *Al-Ahali* and *Al-Yasar*, respectively the weekly newspaper and the monthly magazine of the leftist Tagammu Party, faced similar financial and circulation problems. *Al-Ahali* saw five chief editors succeed each other during the past few years, while *Al-Yasar* had to close down temporarily.

Summing up the problem, Imam said: "When changing to deal with the various [market] challenges, a party newspaper has one of two options: either to become more political or to sensationalise." Which way he is heading is obviously debatable. It will also reflect the wider trend in today's political press.

Angry editor takes a holiday

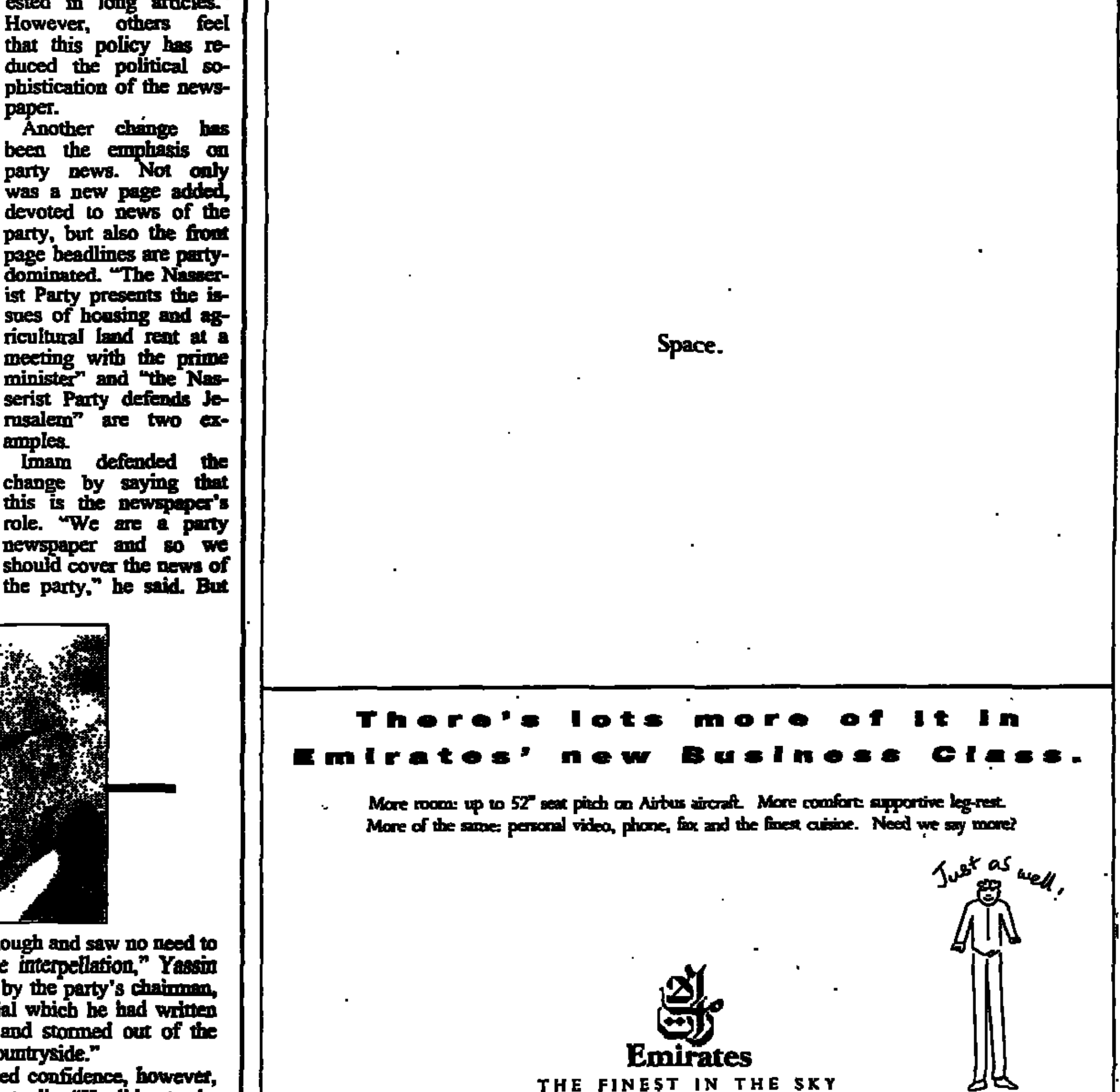
GAMAL Badawi, editor-in-chief of the *Wafd* newspaper, the daily mouthpiece of the liberal Wafd Party, gave himself an open-ended vacation after a quarrel over editorial policy with the party's chairman, Fouad Serageddin, reports **Shaden Shehab**.

Yassin Serageddin, Fouad Serageddin's brother, and a Wafidst MP, told *Al-Ahram Weekly* that Badawi was angered by the insistence of the party's chairman on printing a story by Ayman Nour, another Wafdist MP, that accused Health Minister Ismail Sallam of misusing public funds. The story was based on an interpellation — a question by the MP to which the minister is obligated to respond — which Nour had addressed to Sallam in the People's Assembly two weeks ago.

"Badawi thought that publishing a story about the parliamentary session was enough and saw no need to print a separate story on the interpellation," Yassin Serageddin said. "Overruled by the party's chairman, Badawi cancelled the editorial which he had written for last Thursday's edition and stormed out of the newspaper, heading for the countryside."

Yassin Serageddin expressed confidence, however, that Badawi would return eventually. "He did not submit a resignation and the Wafd Party is too dear to him," Yassin said.

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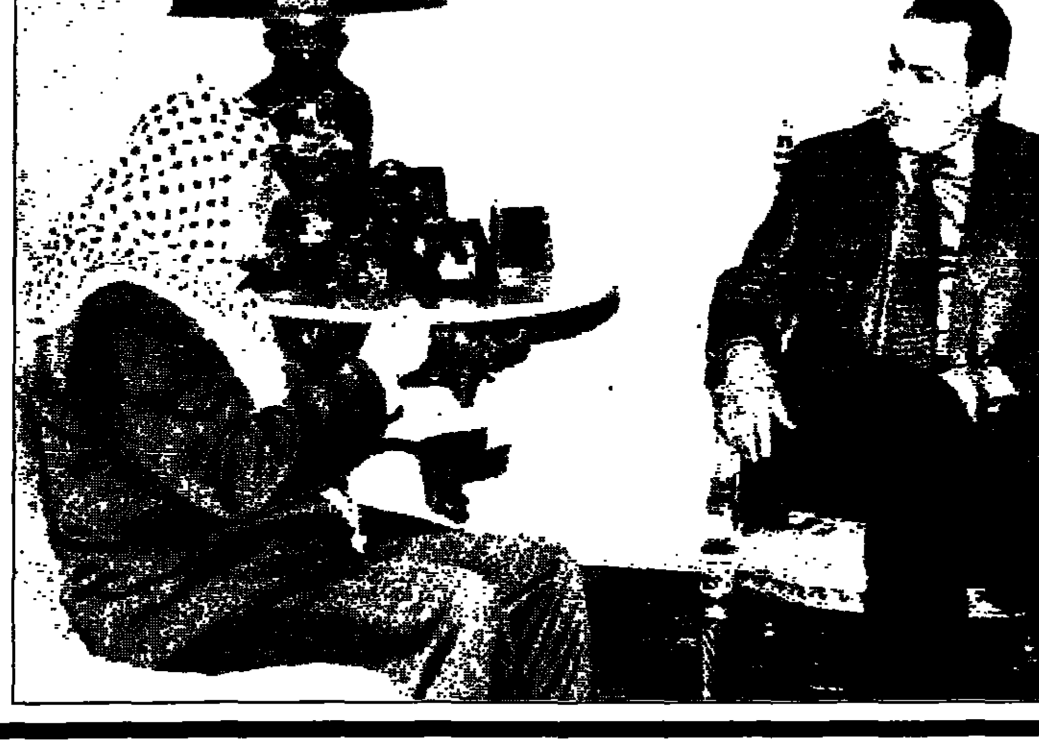
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Diplomatic moves for peace

As part of its efforts to salvage the peace process, Cairo played host to Yasser Arafat and dispatched a presidential adviser to Washington for consultations. **Nevine Khalil** reviews the week's diplomatic moves



President Hosni Mubarak met with Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat in Cairo on Monday and decided to dispatch his political adviser, Osama El-Baz, to Washington for consultations about breaking the stalemate in the peace effort. Topping the Egyptian agenda are a *halt of settlement activity in the Occupied* Territories, especially Jerusalem, the implementation of the Oslo agreements, particularly troop redeployment in the West Bank, and the resumption of meaningful negotiations between the Palesitnians and Israelis.

As Foreign Minister Amr Moussa arrived in the Maltese capital to attend a Euro-Meditarranean *partnership* conference, El-Baz headed for Washington to hold talks with the US administration. "We always strive to build bridges of contact between the different parties in the *peace process and contribute to* removing obstacles and narrowing differences," Mubarak said on Monday. "We know the dangers that can result from a set back in peace."

"Contacts are going on with *all* parties," Moussa said on the same day, "and we hope there will be positive results." The foreign minister however, was unsure how soon a solution will be reached: "There will be results, but it's very difficult." A halt in settlement building, continued redeployment and resumption of talks "will contribute largely to the return of calm and non-violence in the relations between Palesitnians and Israelis," Moussa said.

He added, however, that diplomatic activities are not an alternative to practical action on the ground, namely an about-turn in Israel's hardline position.

Upon the request of US President Bill Clinton for Egyptian input, Mubarak dispatched El-Baz to Washington on *Tuesday for talks with Secretary of* State Madeleine Albright, National Security Adviser Samuel Berger and US special envoy Dennis Ross. Mubarak said that El-Baz's visit aims "to find a way out of this crisis."

In an interview with the National *Democratic Party's* mouthpiece *Mayo*, Mubarak said he received a message from Clinton last weekend on problems facing the peace process and the need to revive negotiations. "We are interested in continuing peace and realise its importance to the countries in the region," he added. Last week Mubarak affirmed that Egypt would not respond to mounting public opinion pressure to sever diplomatic ties with Israel "because we need to contact the other side to help solve the existing problem."

Before leaving on a five-day trip, El-Baz said he will discuss "ways out of the current dilemma in the peace process and US ideas in this regard". He will also review US-Palestinian talks and probe US reaction to the European initiative, which is likely to be put forward *as a joint US-European initiative*. El-Baz emphasised Arab support for a European role in the peace process, "but this must be in coordination with the US," he said.

Moussa said that any initiative must deal with settlement building in Jerusalem, an issue addressed by the European initiative but not entirely on Arab terms. He added, however, that the European viewpoint, compared to the American and Israeli perspectives, was closer to the Arabs' position.

Moussa described the European initiative as "positive" and said it "clearly addresses the issues of settlements, confidence building, equal commitment on both sides and the necessity of dealing with Jerusalem." Responding to Israeli opposition to a European role, Moussa said: "If too many cooks spoil the *broth, then one bad cook makes all* sorts of inedible food" — an oblique reference to Israeli Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu.

El-Baz would not reveal the ideas he was carrying to the US to defuse the situation, which flared up in mid-March when Israel started building a Jewish quarter in East Jerusalem. Egypt is pressing for a freeze on settlement activity in the Occupied Territories, especially East Jerusalem, for the duration of final status talks. Also, in line with Cairo's constant condemnation of violence in the region, Egypt wants both sides to take all measures to halt all violent acts. Cairo believes that once Netanyhau reconsiders his intimidating policies, violence will automatically come to a halt.

"The non-implementation of the *peace accords and the attempts to* change the status of Jerusalem are behind the current crisis, thus we should work to remove these factors," Mubarak said. The president advised both sides to "study the reasons behind the *current crisis* and work to avoid them in the future."

Before travelling to Malta for the two-day meeting, Palestinian President Yasser Arafat held talks with Mubarak in Cairo on Monday to ask his advice on ways to salvage the peace process. Attending the talks were Arafat's spokesman, Marwan Kanafani, his senior adviser, Nabil Abu Rudeina, Moussa and El-Baz.

Speaking to reporters after the meeting, Moussa said that the Palestinian *side is willing to go back to the negotiating* table, but talks should be based on "balanced" and acceptable positions, "unlike recent proposals put forward by Israel". He added that resolving the issues of settlement building and redeployment will make it possible for negotiations "to begin from a positive point". "What is important is to *deal with the issue as a* whole, and not from one angle only," Moussa said.

Hours before the conference focusing *on* Euro-Mediterranean relations began, Arab foreign ministers met in Valetta on Tuesday morning to coordinate the Arab position on the meeting's agenda. "The Middle East is not on the agenda," Moussa *said in Cairo*, "*but it's* looming in the air." He added that Mediterranean countries are directly affected by developments in the peace process.

Moussa denied that preparations are under way for an Arab summit, but that discussions between Arabs revolve around the implementation of last June's Arab summit resolutions. "We as Arabs are now implementing the declaration and resolutions of the last Arab summit," he said. "Any other summit will take place when the need arises."

Moussa would not comment on a possible coalition government between the Likud and Labour parties, saying this is "an internal development". El-Baz said that evaluating a coalition government depended on *its policies*, "*whether it* will result in more moderate Israeli policies or whether they remain unchanged."

Earlier in the week, Moussa described Israeli Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu's determination to press ahead with settlement building and refusal to accept the principles of peace "as a very negative position, which will critically affect the peace process." He added that "the basis of [Netanyahu's] thinking and that of Israeli diplomacy is erroneous and dangerous, and is not in line with the logic of peace or *coexistence*."

Luring the tigers

Kamal El-Ganzouri is making a three-nation tour in the Far East — the first by an Egyptian prime minister for the past 33 years. **Shaden Shehab** *in Cairo assesses the tour's objectives*

Prime Minister Kamal El-Ganzouri arrived in China on Tuesday for an official visit, the final stage of a three-nation Far East tour designed to open new markets for Egyptian exports and woo foreign investments.

During the tour, which also included Malaysia and Singapore, El-Ganzouri signed *some agreements and negotiated* others covering a total of 33 investment projects, including textile, cement and agricultural ventures. The agreements *would* provide investment guarantees and eliminate double taxation and are targeted to promote trade exchanges between Egypt and the three Asian countries.

El-Ganzouri was accompanied on the tour — the first by an Egyptian prime minister since 1964 — by the ministers of electricity, trade, industry, local administration and cabinet affairs, as well as a delegation of about 25 business*men*.

El-Ganzouri said the tour was aimed at attracting foreign investments and correcting a trade imbalance which favoured *the Asian* "tigers."

Describing the nations he is visiting as pioneers of development, El-Ganzouri said that he wanted to persuade *them* "to invest in Egypt and prove to them Cairo's ability to provide foreign investors with attractive benefits. It is important to hold dialogue with them to explain the scope of development in Egypt," he said.

Before embarking on the tour, Ganzouri told reporters in Cairo the visits were "an important step in addressing the world community regarding economic *development in Egypt and emphasising* our ability to provide investors with a safe and profitable environment."

Noting that 50 legislative measures have been passed for the protection of investments and the removal of obstacles facing investors, El-Ganzouri said the near future "should witness numerous joint projects in Egypt as well as at regional and international levels."

Declaring that Sino-Egyptian political relations were at a peak, El-Ganzouri said: "We are working to push forward bilateral economic ties."

His visit to Beijing, he said, *will focus on bilateral economic* projects which had been presented already to the Chinese side. "We will sign 15 business agreements," he said. These *will cover joint ventures in the* Egypt-based production of butane gas, cement, phosphate fertilisers and raw materials for pharmaceuticals as well as the construction of a three-star hotel in the Giza Pyramid area.

A joint Egyptian-Chinese statement is planned, promoting trade exchange between the two countries and boosting the volume of Egyptian exports to China to about $100 million in 1998. Egyptian exports to China in 1995 did not exceed $13 million while imports from China were as high as $440 mil*lion*.

El-Ganzouri signed an investment guarantee agreement in Singapore on Tuesday. Together with a bilateral pact for the avoidance of double taxation, the agreement "will raise the interest of businessmen from Singapore in Egypt," Singaporean Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong said at a dinner he hosted for El-Ganzouri.

A statement from Singapore's trade and industry ministry said that the agreement gave investors from the two countries "greater confidence and protection when investing in each other's country."

*El-Ganzouri told a news con*ference that four cooperation agreements were also signed. The first provides for planting 50,000 feddans of cotton east of *Oweinat, in the Egyptian West*ern Desert, and then help with manufacturing it into textiles for export; the second for developing a military shipbuilding yard in Alexandria; the third for establishing a palm-oil refinery in Sinai for export and local use; and the fourth for the establishment of an advanced technological project in the Sinai.

Goh said that Singapore supported Egypt's leadership role in the Middle East peace process and reaffirmed the state's commitment to a "com*prehensive, just and lasting*" settlement of the regional conflict.

On the first leg of the Asian tour, El-Ganzouri paid a one-day visit to Malaysia. In a statement on Monday, the prime minister said that three agreements had been signed, covering investment guarantees, the avoidance of double taxation and air transport.

El-Ganzouri and his Malaysian counterpart, Mahatir Mohamed, also signed two memoranda of understanding, one for the promotion of exports and the other for tourism cooperation.

The agreements are largely symbolic because Egypt has no investments in Malaysia, while only a single Malaysian company has a small investment in Egypt. *Egyptian exports to Ma*laysia amount to $11.30 million annually while imports from Malaysia stand at $272.12 mil*lion*.

Mahatir Mohamed said that he is "optimistic regarding the future of cooperation with Egypt," adding that his country "is keen on encouraging businessmen to invest in Egypt." He said that Egypt is qualified to become a big trade market and the steps it had taken for economic reform and opening the door for investments had a great impact on encouraging in*vestors*.

The two prime ministers criticised Israel for failing to reach a peace settlement with the Palestinians. "Both are aware of the difficulties caused by [Israeli Prime Minister Binyamin] Netanyahu, who is belligerent and has not shown any keenness to push ahead with the peace process," said Foreign Minister Abdullah Badawi. Predominantly Muslim Malaysia has no diplomatic ties with Israel but does have limited trade relations.

Before beginning the Asian tour, El-Ganzouri said that he is planning another tour of Arab *states to promote Egypt's in*vestment potential. On the possible establishment of an Arab common market, El-Ganzouri said that there must be "an increase in joint production first, so as to create free trade between Arab countries and promote *the* circulation of commodities among them and a gradual decrease of tariffs until their eventual removal."

Moussa's Maltese mission

The crisis of the Arab-Israeli peace process, triggered by the construction of a Jewish settlement in Arab East Jerusalem, hung heavily over a Euro-Mediterranean conference in Malta. **Gamal Nkrumah** reports

Malta is no Barcelona. Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat and Israeli Foreign Minister David Levy were off to Malta on Tuesday. But one issue that has hardly been mentioned in deliberations at the Malta Euro-Mediterranean Conference is the stalled Middle East peace process.

Foreign Minister Amr Moussa criticised Israel for derailing the peace process with its determined efforts to "Judaise Jerusalem". "How can we talk about peace and stability in the region when the peace process in the Middle East is stumbling on all its tracks?" Moussa angrily asked reporters in Malta.

The idea of the Euro-Mediterranean Conference in Malta was conceived primarily for the 15 EU and the 12 southern Mediterranean nations to review their economic relations. The two-day Malta Euro-Mediterranean Conference, which ended yesterday, is essentially a talking shop to air ideas revolving around the EU's bid to establish a Euro-Mediterranean Free Trade Area — the largest in the world — by 2010.

Few observers feel that a break in the peace deadlock will come out of the Malta conference. Arafat last met Israeli Prime Minister Binyamin *Netanyahu* on *18* March, but since then communication between the two sides has come to an abrupt halt. The Malta meeting between Arafat and Levy is the first since the construction of the Jewish settlement on Jebel Abu Ghneim. The EU's Middle East envoy, Miguel Angel Moratinos, in Malta for the conference, has been working behind the scenes to ease the tensions. But Arab foreign ministers in Malta warned that the Mediterranean *Security Charter* as envisaged by the EU cannot be looked into while Israel continues to obstruct the peace process.

Last week, the Israelis warned that they would boycott the Malta conference if the issue of economic cooperation between the northern and southern Mediterranean does *not remain at the top of the agenda*. The Europeans, in any case, also want to focus on economic matters.

The various EU governments have committed over $5.4 billion in aid to North Africa and the Middle East, to be disbursed between 1995 and 1999. Europe, no doubt, sees this as a wise investment. Trans-Mediterranean divisions have done great harm in the past. The gross disparities in income and levels of development, in the EU's perspective, pose as great a threat to European security and stability as does the Arab-Israeli conflict.

There are marked differences between the developing nations of the southern Mediterranean basin, where attempts at economic integration and regional cooperation have been frustrated by political constraints, in contrast with the high degree of economic integration in the EU. The stalling of the Middle East peace process, the Algerian crisis and the political isolation of Libya — with *the Arab world's longest coastline on the* Mediterranean Sea — have all contributed to slowing down economic integration in the southern part. These problems have also contributed to complicating relations between *northern and southern nations.*

"1997 marks the 40th anniversary of the signing of the Treaty of Rome, when the idea of the European Union was first conceived. 1997 also marks the first cooperation agreement between the European Union and Egypt," Christian Falkowski, head of the delegation of the European Union in Egypt, told *Al-Ahram Weekly*.

"Negotiations between Egypt and the EU have been a remarkable learning process for all parties involved. We have always had an open market in Europe for Egyptian industrial products," Falkowski said. Access for Egyptian agricultural produce, and especially products like citrus fruits, are more problematic. "The liberalisation of agricultural prices in Egypt and the increase in agricultural production are bound to change matters. There are outstanding issues such as oranges. We shall find a way to bridge the existing gap. The gap is not actually that big," Falkowski said.

But, Moussa in Malta said that, "recent developments in negotiations have stirred [Egyptian] suspicions about a genuine and equitable political will on the European side to conclude and agreement with Egypt."

Some observers dismissed the Malta conference as one in which Arabs, Israelis, Turks and Europeans would meet in Malta to discuss predetermined agendas. The notion of an Arab Common Market remains as improbable as ever, but Arab *delegates rallied around Libya* and stressed that Libya must be part of the Euro-Mediterranean project.

The Turks are obliged to settle for less than full membership of the EU, while the *Cypriots* and the *Maltese* are bracing themselves for a new lease of life as full members of the EU in the near future. The Israelis were told in *no* uncertain terms that they do not qualify as Europeans and that their only *salvation* lies in closer ties with their Arab neighbours.

Can anything meaningful come out of meetings like Malta? "A very practical example that springs to mind is the *Upper* Gulf of Aqaba Oil Spill Contingency Project — conceived as part of a multilateral working group on the environment and established within the framework of the Middle East peace *process*. *Marine* pollution has been identified as one of the main issues of immediate regional concern," Falkowski said.

Falkowski conceded that the success of the Euro-Mediterranean project hinges on the realisation of lasting peace in the Middle East. "For the EU, that means demonstrating greater sensitivity to Arab concerns," he said. Falkowski *stressed that* political issues should not overshadow economic concerns in Malta, however. "There is a need for the Mediterranean countries to demonstrate a more constructive approach to the issues dividing them," Falkowski told the *Weekly*. "Resources in the region are very limited. The serious water problems of the Middle East, for example, can only be solved jointly," Falkowski added.

New routes to Asia

Senior Foreign Ministry official Adel El-Safti toured five Asian countries on a trade-boosting mission and is back with positive impressions, which he shared with **Khaled Dawoud**





Adel El-Safti, first under-secretary at the Foreign Ministry, visited Australia and five Asian countries — Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand and South *Korea — on a month-long tour* that ended on 6 April.

The tour aimed at opening new markets for Egyptian exports, El-Safti told *Al-Ahram Weekly*, as well as attracting investments from Asia's fast-growing economies.

"We have a lot to understand and to learn and [we need to] cooperate with *those countries if we want to* achieve a good rate of growth," El-Safti said.

Prime Minister Kamal El-Ganzouri is currently touring Singapore, Malaysia, and China, accompanied by 25 businessmen, some of whom are involved in high-tech and computer industries, a specialty of the "Asian tigers," El-Safti noted.

"*We have to convince investors that* opportunities exist in our country. This happens mainly through contacts between businessmen, private sectors and also the government. The government is doing its part and, I hope, businessmen will do their part as well," El-Safti said.

In his tour, El-Safti sensed that Asian officials want to develop trade and political ties with Egypt. He added that he discussed with them the possibility of opening new air routes, connecting their capitals with Cairo, in order to boost trade and tourism.

Egypt hopes to increase the volume of its trade with Asia. Moreover, it hopes to redress the current imbalance in that trade.

Thailand exports to Egypt exceed its imports from it by a ratio of 10 to 1. In Singapore's case, the ratio is 26 to 1. Even China, a country which has traded with Egypt for the past 40 years, imports a meagre $13 million worth of Egyptian goods; whereas Egypt im*ports a whooping $440 million* worth of Chinese goods.

"The message I sought to convey to those countries is that trade is a two-way street, and that we would like to have this imbalance corrected," El-Safti said.

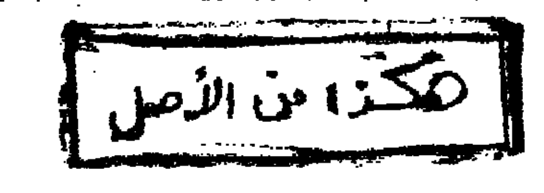
Asian officials, El-Safti said, were eager to learn about Egypt's position on the latest developments in the Arab-Israeli peace process. "I can assure you that these countries, as a whole, were sympathetic to the Egyptian point of view in the peace process," he pointed out.

Asked whether he thinks Asian countries were reluctant to invest in Egypt due to the present stalemate in the Middle East peace process, El-Safti said: "I got the impression they would withhold investments in Israel, not in Egypt. They draw a distinction between Egypt and Israel in this connection. Egypt, for them, is a very stable country with an emerging economy and a population of 60 million plus. All this means a good market for their products."

El-Safti said he told Asian officials that the Middle East peace process is "in great difficulty" and that the United States is negotiating a new initiative involving Israel and the Palestinians. "We hope that this initiative will yield results in the near future, and that reason will prevail, so that the peace process may continue," El-Safti added.

Asked whether the American initiative was going to be, as some Arabs suspect, a mere repetition of Israel's demand for concessions from the Palestinians, El-Safti replied: "I think the US initiative is more balanced; it is not a mere repetition of the Israeli point of view. The Americans are smarter than that, and we are keen to have them [acting] as honest brokers in the peace process. I do not think they are going to undermine their unique position in the region by just being a mouthpiece for Israel. So, to say that the American initiative is just a repetition of Israel's views is not true," El-Safti said.

Edited by **Wadie Kirolos**



Problematic partnership

Mona Qassem balances the pros and cons of Egypt's impending partnership with the European Union

Egypt will face some major challenges in entering the Partnership Agreement with the European Union (EU) which is currently being discussed after failing to materialise at the end of last year. This agreement entails the creation of a free trade area encompassing some 30 to 40 countries and the liberalisation of the trade of goods between the expanded EU and most Mediterranean countries as well as among the Mediterranean countries themselves.

This project raises questions concerning the EU's contribution to the development of the productive capacity and the modernisation of the technologies of its partners necessary for the latter to actively take part in the proposed free trade area. EU documents refer to this vaguely as cooperation between the industries of the two sides of the Mediterranean. There is no mention of the EU's previous commitment to re-evaluate its protectionist measures against goods coming from east and south of the Mediterranean. These measures include restrictions on exports to the EU, specifically on textile and agricultural exports.

A *partnership with the EU means an end to the donor-receiver* relationship which Egypt had with Europe. Egypt's role will change from being a recipient to being a full economic and trade partner. The partnership will also reinforce the investment-friendly environment which Egypt is fostering in order to attract modern expertise, management and technology to the country.

The situation, however, is worrisome in that one party, the EU, is significantly stronger than the other. In such a framework, there are fears that although the agreement will open European markets to Egyptian exports, the latter do not represent a threat because the competitive ability of Egyptian industrial goods is modest whether in quality or in price in comparison to European goods.

Additionally, countries south of the Mediterranean suffer a number of problems which will handicap them when competing in the free trade area. These include the level of economic development of these countries in comparison to EU and Central and Eastern European countries. For example, according to 1992 figures, the average per capita income compared to Gross Domestic Product (GDP) reached $19,000 in EU countries and $1,927 in Eastern and Central Europe. In the meantime, it did not surpass $1,589 in Arab Mediterranean countries. However, this figure does not reveal average incomes which are much lower. For example, in Egypt, the annual average per capita income has retreated to $660. It is expected as well that the population will double in the coming 30 years which will mean an increased burden on infrastructure and social services. A great percentage of the labour force is also illiterate and lacks adequate training.

Even though the exact form of cooperation within the Partnership Agreement has not been decided yet, it will probably entail industrial cooperation through subcontracting, joint projects and cooperation in energy and the environment, as well as in the monitoring of population growth and urban concentration.

Despite such frameworks of cooperation, the EU ignores the effect of economic reforms and structural adjustments on the countries south of the Mediterranean, including Egypt. Especially since these result in increased unemployment, they should be considered seriously. In this regard, the agreement shows inequality and lack of real assistance.

There is no doubt that when Egypt has completed its economic reform program, the management of businesses through the private sector mentality will result in increasing the capacity of the whole economy. This will push producers to be more creative and to develop their performance and will result in a better final product more able to penetrate new markets. Here, the role of commercial representation offices in tapping new markets or expanding existing ones is important, also to give Egyptian exporters the chance to display their products abroad. The Egyptian Ministry of Foreign Affairs has felt the importance of this issue and is trying hard to give Egypt the greatest advantages within the proposed agreement.

Increased production will create new job opportunities and improve living standards, supporting the low-income stratum and creating greater equality between income levels. It will also mean the continuation of Egypt's model role for modernisation in the region as well as placing its capabilities in agricultural, industrial, educational and *scientific research at the disposal of its Arab* Mediterranean partners.

There are a number of factors that the Egyptian economy must take into account to compete and achieve an equitable status in a partnership with the EU. Economic institutions need to be made more competitive internationally, with products conforming to international export *standards. New environmental standards must* be negotiated within the agreement as well as legislation on intellectual property rights, to be discussed at a later stage during the negotiations with the EU.

Negotiations with the EU have shown that there is a perception that Egypt has the capacity to become like China in this region, *attracting direct investments, especially from* Europe, as well as multinationals to set up business in Egypt.

The agreement will have an impact on Egyptian agricultural products. Because they will gain access to the European market they will help Egypt balance the costs it will have to bear upon the implementation of the agreement. It is therefore important to *study the effect development projects,* agricultural expansion, the General Agreement on Trade and Tariffs (GATT) and the World Trade Organisation (WTO) will have on the trade of agricultural goods, especially with Central and South Europe.

Therefore for the establishment of a free trade area, there must be a lifting of customs, a liberalisation of competition, the protection of intellectual property rights and the freeing of trade, services and the movement of capital. Additionally, there is great need for EU private and public financial support for the economies of the southern Mediterranean countries as well as for sup-

Commercial law overhauled

A People's Assembly special committee is currently debating the long-awaited draft law aimed at upgrading Egypt's commercial practices

In what is expected to result in a radical revision of Egypt's commercial legislation, the government last week submitted to the People's Assembly a draft commercial law. The draft aims at providing a comprehensive make-over to the country's outdated commerce laws which have been in effect since 1883. As many as 500 out of the draft's 772 articles are directed at bringing the country's commercial dealings, transactions and legislation in line with the articles of GATT.

Equally important, the draft law serves as *umbrella legislation for a variety of commercial* and professional activities, foremost among which are the supply of goods and services, industrial activities, overland and sea freight and brokerage, insurance and banking activities. The bill also defines as commercial business sectors such fields as the media, commercial uses of software programmes, mining operations, livestock breeding, tourism, export and import, water, gas and electricity distribution.

The articles of the proposed law also cover new and vital areas not covered by existing commercial legislation such as technology transfer, contracts, air and marine transport projects, satellite broadcasting and restoration works.

According to Justice Minister Farouq Seif El-Nasr, the new law has been in the making since the early 1990s, and is part and parcel of the government's efforts to revamp existing economic legislation under the banner of economic reform and liberalisation.

It is, he said, "a revolutionary step" that has been taken after several attempts were made over the last 50 years to upgrade the country's commercial laws. While these efforts did not pan out, Seif El-Nasr is confident that this law may be just what the country needs to push along its privatisation and economic reform programme. This bill, he added, has been examined and revised by Mohamed Sayed Tantawi, Egypt's former grand mufti and the current Sheikh of Al-Azhar. Tantawi has confirmed that the bill is in line with Islamic *shari'a*.

The draft law, explained Seif El-Nasr, upgrades outdated commercial transaction methods and ways of settling commercial disputes. "For example, the bill devoted roughly 67 articles to upgrading cheque-based operations," said Seif El-Nasr. "The cheque has lost much of its importance in Egyptian economic life. Currently, cheques can be written on any piece of paper since penalties are not severe enough to reduce this kind of fraudulent activity." The proposed law, however, dictates that cheques be issued by banks and represent a real bank account. Similarly, they can be cashed at any time, regardless of their payment date. This, he explained, will be instrumental in putting an end to the use of post-dated cheques — a practice which opens the door for fraud. The penalty for this crime, under the new law, should it be approved, is a one-year prison term and a maximum fine of LE10,000.

"The bill also formulates new procedures on bankruptcy issues, such as providing special judges whose purview lies not only in settling bankruptcy disputes but also regulating commercial bankruptcy measures," added the justice minister.

Despite the reforms the bill promises to introduce, a number of MPs and economists complain that it is not comprehensive enough and fails to deal adequately with some sensitive commercial issues. Ahmed Sharafeddin, a legal advisor to the Egyptian Investment Guarantee Company, said that the new bill lacks articles dealing with vital aspects of commercial businesses such as brand and patent rights and registered trademarks. He added that it is clearly not concerned with regulating all kinds of commercial activities.

"The draft law is not the main source of rules which will govern commercial businesses," stated Sharafeddin. "Rather, it cites other laws such as investment and capital market legislation in governing different types of businesses." Moreover, it will also be in conflict with the current law on commercial bookkeeping, as well as the commercial registration Law 34 of 1976.

"The proposed bill does not clearly state whether the law of commercial bookkeeping will be cancelled or revised in light of the new articles introduced by this bill on the same matter," he noted.

"The same thing applies to the articles introduced by the bill on rules of commercial registration. The bill did not specify if these articles will serve as an alternative to Law 34 or whether a new, independent commercial registration law will be issued in the near future," he continued.

Sharafeddin, however, commended a special chapter of the draft law for introducing a number of articles that deal with illegal commercial competition, including the infringement of commercial registration trademarks and patent rights.

Other MPs were not so generous, voicing concerns over Article 9 of the draft law which, they say, defines some forms of agricultural activity where farmers use machines as being a commercial activity. Ibrahim El-Nimiki, deputy chairman of the Assembly's *Legislative Committee*, warned that this article could negatively affect millions of Egyptian farmers.

El-Nimiki's objection was so forceful that Mohamed Moussa, the committee's chairman, decided to hold a special meeting on this article alone.

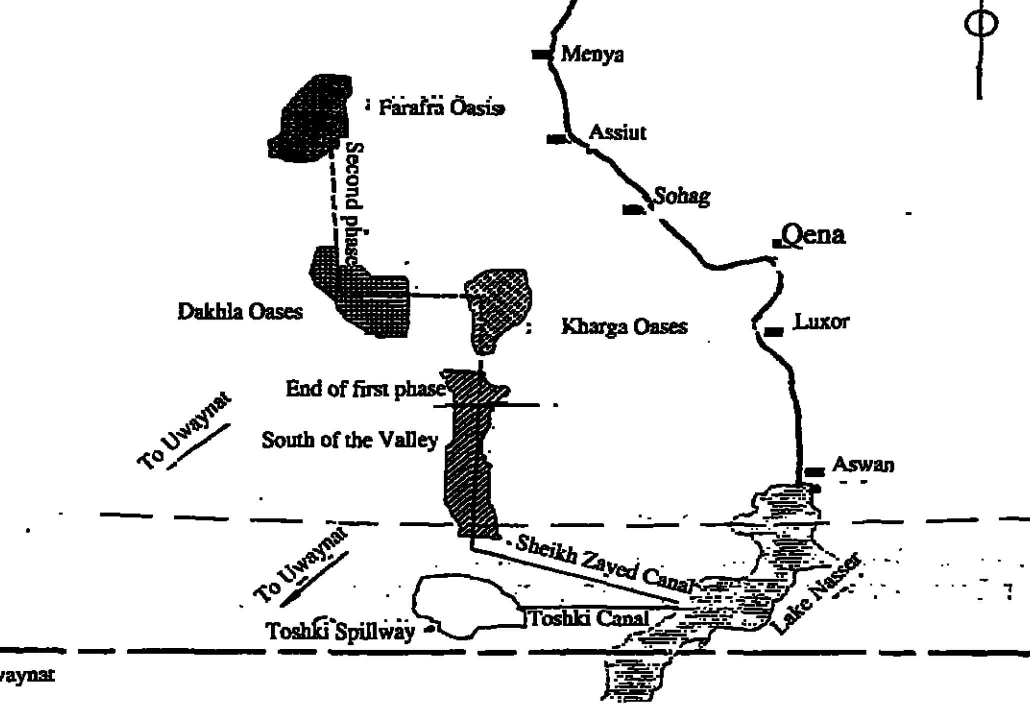
On the other hand, some MPs were in favour of the new legislation. Economist Medhat Hassanein, head of the American University in Cairo's Business Administration Department, said that the law represents a long-awaited step towards stimulating Egypt's commercial life.

"The law not only puts an end to a bevy of bureaucratic obstacles impeding commercial contracts, but also facilitates the settlement of commercial disputes," stated Hassanein.

To ensure that any shortcomings in the bill are addressed, Fathi Sorour, the Assembly's speaker, has decided to form a special parliamentary committee comprising academics and economic and commercial experts to discuss the measure fully.

Entrepreneurs bet on Toshki

More than just a canal for the 21st century, the Toshki water-way is viewed by investors as a potential tourism gold mine. **Rehab Saad** reports



Businessmen are often among the first to capitalise on a new idea. So when the government launched plans to undertake the Toshki mega-project, the time seemed ripe for investors to get in on the ground floor. The new project, which is expected to open new doors for Egypt in the 21st century, aims to construct a canal which will carry water from Lake Nasser to the dry enclaves of the desert in parts of southwest Egypt and the New Valley.

With such an ambitious plan already under way, investors saw the opportunity for expanding the tourism industry to areas where few other than scavengers dared to venture. To *date, three projects have been planned* to help transform this stretch of desert into another bustling tourist destination.

The first such project, to be undertaken under the watchful eye of Onsi *Sawiris's Orascom Company, is the* construction of a four-star hotel which will be used by the engineers working on Toshki and VIPs visiting the area. Being built with a capital of LE30 million, the new hotel will have 200 rooms. The second project, also in the hotel industry, will be undertaken by businessman Hussein Salem, the owner of the Sharm El-Sheikh Mövenpick. This hotel, which will cost LE40 million, will also have 200 rooms.

A third businessman, Kamal Abul-Kheir, will sink LE35 million of his capital into the construction of a third hotel. This three-star hotel, which will include an entertainment and recreation complex as well as tennis courts and a health club, is Abul-Kheir's way of displaying his conviction that the Toshki project is exactly what Egypt needs. "I'm so convinced of the importance of this mega-project that I'm ready to begin my project immediately," he stated.

Projects aside, however, getting tourists to travel to the middle of the desert and sit under an unforgiving sun will, in itself, require a Herculean marketing effort on the part of the investors. This should not be a problem, they argue. The region will be promoted as a prime location of desert safaris and medical tourism. Moreover, the proximity of the three and four-star hotels to Lake Nasser will ensure easy access to the area by Nile cruise ships.

The area is also rich in archaeolog*ical sites and historical value* — a fact which could be sufficiently enticing for other investors to follow in the footsteps of these three businessmen.

"Sixty kilometres west of the Tosh*ki Canal is Nabta, a prehistoric site* situated along the Toshki-Owaynat Road," said Adel Radi, head of the Tourism Development Authority (TDA). "Nabta represents a model of the urban communities which used to exist in the area of the old water passage. This area can be turned into a major tourist destination once excavations are recommenced."

"Furthermore," continued Radi, "the canal's pumping station, which is considered a huge engineering work in its own right, will also attract both Egyptian and foreign tourists."

According to Radi, it is not mere speculation on the part of the TDA and investors that this area could become the next tourist hot-spot in Egypt. A study conducted recently by the TDA led to the suggestion of several other projects which could boost *the number of tourists travelling to* the area and transform it into an exclusive resort area.

One example is the construction of a centre and village specialising in therapeutic treatment such as partial *burial in hot sand, said the report.* "Similarly, a tourist village, modeled on those of the Nubia region can be built, along with an international youth camp which will play host to festivals attended by people from around the world."

While these projects have yet to be undertaken, the newfound enthusiasm about tourism in Toshki is a step in the right direction, said the TDA's Radi. "In the past, no one thought of encouraging tourism investments in Toshki," he said. "The emphasis was on established tourism centres like Abu Simbel and the Kharga and Dakhla oases in the New Valley. Now that the Toshki project is under way, we at the TDA have decided to connect the sides of the triangle: Abu Simbel, the New Valley and Toshki."

*The key to the success of this Tosh*ki tourism venture, stressed Radi, is *to treat it as part of the development* of the region as a whole. To this end, the Ministry of Tourism and the TDA have drawn up a plan encompassing the *development of Abu Simbel and* Toshki.

"The plan prepared by the TDA to develop Abu Simbel and the region as a whole includes, among other initiatives, such cornerstone projects as sound and light shows at the temples of Abu Simbel and developing the city centre," he stated. "And, to encourage investments in Abu Simbel, we are planning to hold a three-day conference entitled 'Tourism Investments in Abu Simbel'. This conference will provide investors and potential investors with a prime opportunity to market their projects and coordinate their efforts with local, concerned bodies such as the local governments and the antiquities authority."

The New Valley, which is the third side to the triangle, is also rapidly be*coming the investors' focus of attention.* Last year, the Al-Rowwad Company was formed to build hotels in the Dakhla and Kharga oases in the New Valley. The company has launched two main projects, the first of which is a four-star, 102-room hotel in Kharga. The second is an LE15 million, 66-room, three-star hotel in Dakhla's Mut City.

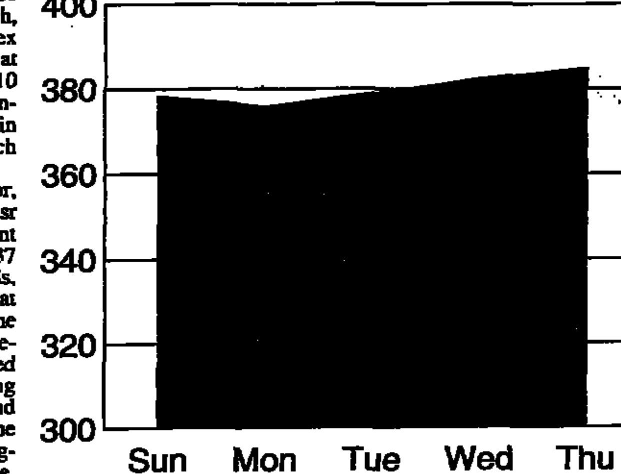
"We are intent on developing this region, which constitutes more than two-thirds of Egypt's total surface area, in order to maximise its tourism potential," said Ahmed Zaki, board chairman of Al-Rowwad. "We aim not just to build hotels in these oases, but to devise a comprehensive view of the entire region as a new tourist destination."

Radi hopes that such projects may encourage the government to build an airport in the Toshki region. "In the meantime, Toshki is accessible by air (the airports of Abu Simbel and the New Valley), road and boat," he said. "However, one day there will be an airport to serve the new area."

L'économie palestinienne asphyxiée
Hebdo Al-Ahram
Lisez
En vente tous les mercredis
Objectif 2017
Le projet d'une nouvelle Egypte.
Bouclages à répétition
L'économie palestinienne asphyxiée.
Conférence Euro-Méditerranée
L'ombre du processus de paix.
L'Egypte de leurs 20 ans
Dossier sur le pèlerinage
Le grand voyage.
Entretien avec le nouvel entraîneur de Zamalek
Le temps de la « grande lessive ».
Rédacteur en Chef Exécutif
Mohamed Salmawy
Président et Rédacteur en Chef
Ibrahim Nafie

Market report

GMI's four-score



IN ITS HIGHEST increase since the second half of March, the General Market Index gained four points to close at 384.8 for the week ending 10 April. Total market turnover increased from LE234 million in the previous week to reach LE350 million.

In the manufacturing sector, shares of the Medinat Nasr Housing and Development Company, of which LE33.37 million worth changed hands, gained LE3.75 to close at LE495. Similarly, shares of the Heliopolis Housing and Development Company registered a LE15 increase before closing at LE450. And, for the second consecutive week, shares of the Universal Anto Company registered an increase in value, gaining LE4.5 to level off at LE36.5. Also on the gainers' list was the Helwan Portland Cement Company, whose shares closed at LE79 after increasing by LE1.6. Trading of the company's shares accounted for 12.33 per cent of total trading action this week.

Also in the manufacturing sector, investors in shares of the Eastern Tobacco Company (ETC) had little reason to celebrate. The company's stock dropped in value by LE4 to close at LE86. This loss is expected to be recovered now that the parent company, the Holding Company for Mining and Refractories, has announced plans to float 2.5 million of ETC's shares within the next few weeks.

The financial sector's Misr International Bank (MIBank) had a rough week, with its shares losing 21.71 per cent of their opening value to close at LE595. This loss came amid *news that* MIBank's biggest shareholder, Banque Misr, had already chosen international financial institutions to manage the forthcoming issue of MIBank's Global Depository Receipts (GDRs).

In all, the shares of 41 companies increased *in value, 42 decreased* and 35 remained unchanged.

Edited by **Ghada Ragab**

New gas complex

THE EGYPTIAN General Petroleum Corporation (EGPC) and Amoco Egypt have selected the coastal city of Port Said as the location for a new liquefied natural gas (LNG) complex. The new plant will be part of a massive project to export LNG to Turkey.

The complex, to be built west of Port Said, will include an LNG plant and LNG shipping terminal. Engineering studies are currently under way to determine optimum site plans and port design.

Robert Shepherd, president of Amoco Egypt, announced that detailed gas sales negotiations between Amoco, EGPC and Turkey's national oil company, Botas, are being held, following the signing of a memorandum of understanding last November. He added that the selection of the project's financial adviser is in its final stages and will be announced shortly.

Administering the plant will be the newly-formed Egypt-LNG company, which will be a shareholders enterprise controlled by the main partners, EGPC and Amoco Egypt. The company will be responsible for the transportation and commercial sale of LNG to Turkey via specially-insulated tankers, which will be either purchased or leased. Other financial arrangements for the project will be announced soon.



Conservative deputy of the Iranian Parliament speaks to tens of thousands of Iranians demonstrating outside the German Embassy in Tehran last Sunday, to protest the German court ruling *(photo:AFP)*

Tehran in the dock

A German court ruling was a golden opportunity for the US to intensify pressure on its European allies to sever all ties with Iran, writes **Khaled Dawoud**

Last week's German court ruling that the "highest state levels" in Tehran ordered the killing of four dissidents in exile was hailed by US officials. They said it was another major piece of evidence confirming Washington's accusations that Iran is one of the world's main sponsors of terrorism. According to Iranian officials, however, this American praise was only *a prelude for a military attack on the Islamic Republic.*

The German court verdict stated that the Iranian and three Lebanese nationals sentenced in the case received direct orders from Iranian President Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, spiritual leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and Iranian secret service head Ali Fallahian. The verdict listed the three officials by title, *not by name. Three Kurdish opposition leaders and* their translator were shot dead by the alleged Iranian agents in a Berlin restaurant in 1992.

The ruling was followed by reciprocal retaliatory measures between Germany, supported by nearly all members of the European Union, and Iran. Most European countries responded positively to the EU's Dutch presidency's invitation to recall their ambassadors from Tehran. Except for Greece, no European country opposed this call. The EU also announced it would suspend its "critical" dialogue with Iran, and the EU foreign ministers will meet in Luxembourg on 29 April to review their policy toward the Iranian government. Japan and Australia are considering similar measures.

Both German and Iranian officials were clearly keen, however, *not to further inflame emotions.* German Foreign Minister Klaus Kinkel said that Germany did not want to rupture its century-old relations with Iran. "The dumbest course would be to conduct a war of cultures," he said. Kinkel added a "re-evaluation" of policy towards Iran was necessary and called upon its leadership to "strictly respect the rules of international law."

Iranian Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Velayati *also expressed* hope that the present crisis would be resolved shortly, and that the EU foreign ministers would decide to send back their ambassadors to Iran after the 29 April meeting.

According to experts on Iranian affairs, European countries have never maintained a united policy towards Tehran. *Their relations depend mostly on their* level of trade with the Islamic Republic. Germany, France and Italy, who are considered Iran's main trade partners in Europe, have always opposed the strong US pressures to isolate Tehran. Other countries such as Britain, Holland, Denmark and Norway, who have nearly no trade ties with Iran, have always pushed for *suspending the so-called "critical dialogue", saying it* has proved to be useless. European countries pushing for severance of ties with Iran do not only cite its involvement in "sponsoring terrorism", but also mention Tehran's negative human rights record.

Iranian President Ali Hashemi Rafsanjani dismissed the German court verdict as "propaganda". He told *Iranians attending Friday's prayer service that* "Germany has broken the hearts of millions of Iranians and Muslims in the world. This verdict will not be easily forgotten or remain unanswered." He added that the verdict was related to the recent developments in the Middle East process and American pressure to foil Iranian attempts to improve its relations with neighbours in the Arab world. "The peace process in the Middle East has reached a dead end and the United States and the West need *an excuse to justify this embarrassing* defeat," Rafsanjani said.

Tehran is due to host the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC) summit next month, and has sent delegates to major Islamic countries, including Saudi Arabia, to invite their leaders to the meeting. Iranian Foreign Minister Velayati met Saudi Crown Prince Abdullah Bin *Abdel-Aziz in a recent OIC ministerial* meeting in Islamabad, Pakistan, and the two said they were keen on maintaining good relations.

The deterioration in the peace process since Israeli Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu came to power in June, and Arab anger over his policies, has also brought closer the two sides, at least in terms of public *statements concerning* the issue. Iran no longer attacks Arab countries involved in peace talks with Israel, except for Jordan, especially since the Arab League decided last month to freeze the normalisation of ties with Tel Aviv.

The United States, meanwhile, hastened to add to the present anti-Iranian atmosphere by leaking intelligence *information attempting to link Iranian officials* to the bombing of an American military complex in Saudi Arabia's eastern province last year that killed 19 American servicemen and wounded more than 500 others.

According to a front-page report in the influential American daily, the *Washington Post*, Hani Abdel-*Rehim El-Sayegh, a Shi'ite Saudi citizen detained in* Canada since 18 March and charged with participating in the bombing of the American military compound in Saudi Arabia, received his orders from a top Iranian intelligence officer. The circumstances surrounding Sayegh make him a very suitable suspect.

According to most Western media reports, Shi'ites are the bad guys in the Arab Gulf region, particularly in Bahrain and Saudi Arabia. They belong to the same *sect as the majority of Iran's population* and are, therefore, often portrayed as the number one suspects whenever political trouble breaks out in the region.

According to Bahrain's Interior Ministry, several Bahraini Shi'ite suspects who are now standing trial in Manama for allegedly participating in an Iranian plot to overthrow the ruling Sunni Al-Khalifa family, "confessed" that they were recruited by a senior Iranian intelligence officer, Ahmad Sherifi, while studying the teachings of Shi'ite Islam in Iran's religious capital of Qom.

In detention, Sayegh told Canadian authorities that he also studied Shi'ite Islam in Qom, and that he regularly visited Shi'ite relatives in Bahrain. Even worse, Sayegh admitted that he used to be a member of the Saudi branch of the Iranian-backed Hizbullah, but later left the group due to differences with other members.

Thus, it would be easy to conclude that Sayegh was recruited by the Bahraini suspects, and paid by the Iranian officer to bomb the *Saudi Al-Khobar complex.* Sayegh claims he was in Damascus at the time of the *bombing, while the Canadian prosecution* insists he was in Saudi Arabia. The *Washington Post* quotes American intelligence sources as saying that they have evidence indicating that Sherifi met Sayegh roughly two years before the Khobar bombing in Damascus.

"The intelligence tying Sherifi to Sayegh has persuaded *a growing number of officials in Washington* and Riyadh of Iran's direct involvement in the attack," the report said. A US official was quoted as saying that "Iran was the organising force behind it [the Khobar bombing]." But the same report also quotes another official as saying that the US authorities still have to be firmly persuaded of Tehran's role and that the evidence so far "does not rise to the level for a criminal prosecution." The FBI declined to comment *on the information.*

Despite these conflicting reports, it is clear that the United States is aiming at making the best use of the latest German court ruling, not only to further isolate Tehran, but perhaps to prepare for a military strike against one of the Islamic world's major countries.

(for Moscow's reaction, see page 7)

Clouds over Yemeni elections

Ahead of parliamentary elections intended to prove that Yemen is again one, President Ali Saleh *is faced with the threat of boycott not only from the opposition but also from within his* own coalition. **Karim El-Gawhary** explains

The memories of the Yemeni civil war are still vivid. Three years after the bloody confrontation, 4.5 million voters are called to the polls to vote for their new parliament. The election is scheduled for 27 April. The big issue causing headaches for the government is not so much the very remote possibility that President Ali Saleh's General People's Congress (GPC) could *lose the elections, but rather their legitimacy.*

These elections are considered the test of the extent to which the wounds of the 70-day war are healed. They will show if the North and South of the country have come together again. Ali Saleh's biggest challenge will be to win not only a majority in the 301-seat parliament but also to secure enough seats from the southern area of the country to prove that the GPC is in fact an all-Yemeni party and Ali Saleh the president of the entire country.

If the most important task of this election *is to prove the unity of the country and the* inclusion of all political forces, things do not look too good for Sanaa's ruling party.

The first blow came when Saleh's former civil war enemies, the Yemeni Socialist Party (YSP), decided to boycott the elections. This was a controversial move, even among the YSP cadres. It was primarily party officials from the South who *voted for the boycott on the grounds* that the elections would legitimise the results of what they consider an unjust civil war and that there were irregularities in the election set-up.

A minority in the YSP voted for participation, fearing the exclusion of the YSP from the political system. "*It is lamentable* that the YSP should voluntarily remove itself from Yemen's political arena," YSP politburo member Jarallah Omar stated, criticising the decision of his own party. Some of the dissidents from the party line are running now as independent candidates. *Proponents* of participation also argue that such a weakening of the YSP will strengthen the position of the Islamist Islah Party, Saleh's coalition partner. The YSP is considered to be the main counterweight to Islah in the Yemeni political landscape.

Saleh himself put on a brave face in reacting to the boycott decision. He pointed out that this will only lead to the isolation of the YSP and that the decision was taken by "separatist forces outside the country" and as such cannot cast doubt on the legitimacy of the elections.

As if the boycott by the third biggest party in Yemen was not enough for the president, *Saleh's supposed political partner,* the Islamist Islah Party, recently got him into further trouble. Some political sources in Sanaa even claim that Saleh's GPC now feels more threatened by its coalition partner than by the opposition.

The coalition now being questioned was from the outset based more on pragmatic power considerations than on ideological similarities. About two weeks before election day, Islah started to openly toy with the idea of boycotting the elections. Ali Saleh himself, in a recent interview in the Arabic weekly magazine *Al-Wasat*, tried to calm the storm by stressing his good personal relationship with Sheikh Abdallah Ben Hussein Al-Ahmar, the head of the *Islah* Party. This relationship, which according to Ali *Saleh is built on "trust and mutual* understanding, also helped in the past to overcome differences between the two parties."

But this time, Saleh's "good friend" Al-Ahmar had *other plans.* Only a few days after Ali Saleh's words of praise, Al-Ahmar proceeded to withdraw his candidacy from the *elections in protest against* alleged violations of the election law, such as the relocation of polling stations after the closing of the list of candidates. Two days later, Islah itself asked the state TV and radio to postpone airing its election programmes, in a clear boycott threat.

But the real fall-out between Saleh and Islah is not so much about electoral procedures as about securing bargaining chips in an increasingly uneasy relationship. Attempts in January to divide the constituencies between the two parties to their mutual benefit were quickly undermined by the two sides. "Each was trying to position itself so as to receive a healthy share of the development money being *spent on* health and education for their constituency, while accusing the other of corruption," one observer explained.

Besides the little skirmishes for power *and a share of the cake, larger issues divide* the two parties. After the civil war, Saleh came under international *pressure* to stop harbouring militant Islamists, a pressure which he then applied to his coalition partner. Al-Ahmar replied that Yemen could only contain these groups by strengthening the more modest Muslim Brotherhood, an integral part of Al-Ahmar's Islah Party *and, according to him, a main pillar of the* country's social order.

Bargaining between the coalition partners might continue until the day before the elections, the last possible date to withdraw. *Using threats of withdrawing* candidates or even fully boycotting the elections, Islah will try to improve its post-election position by squeezing concessions out of an already cornered Ali Saleh. The deals cut in the next two weeks will be crucial to the outcome of the elections.

Abu Marzouk case puts US democracy in question

The prolonged detainment of Hamas leader Mousa Abu Marzouk in the US has led to a questioning of America's motives. **Lamis Andoni** reports from Washington

Although Israel has dropped its demands for the extradition of detained Hamas leader Mousa Abu Marzouk, the US is refusing to release him until he confesses to involvement in "terrorism". Abu *Marzouk's case, meanwhile, awaits a hearing by the Immigration* and Naturalisation Services (INS), but so far no date has been set.

The Hamas leader, who was detained in July 1995 at Kennedy International Airport, was supposed to be released immediately after Israel dropped its extradition demand. Instead, the US has transferred his case to the INS in a move that was condemned by his defence lawyers as a clear violation of American law. The action also sparked suspicion that his detention is being deliberately prolonged until Israel and the US decide on the next steps to be taken *in the Middle East.*

Abu Marzouk's lawyers have already protested against what *they see as US government intervention denying the Islamist* detainee his lawful rights. Lead attorney, Sherif Bassiouni, has accused the American authorities of wilful violation of the law for political reasons.

In an interview with *Al-Ahram Weekly*, Bassiouni, an internationally renowned human rights advocate, said that the US government is either ignorant of its own laws or is deliberately prolonging Abu Marzouk's detention to give Israel time to renew demands for his extradition once the current violence in the West Bank and Gaza Strip has subsided.

"There is good faith (on the part of the American government), but total *ignorance of the law*, or bad faith and manipulation of the law," Bassiouni said in a telephone interview from his Chicago office.

According to American law, a detainee should be released if the *extradition does not take place within 60 days of* the original verdict. Israel has not only missed the deadline but has officially dropped its demand *for the extradition of Abu Marzouk for fear* of retaliation by Hamas activists. But instead of setting Abu Marzouk free, in accordance with the law, the US Justice Department referred the Hamas activist back to court. However, when the court convened last week to look into the Palestinian politician's case, the judge decided that it should be referred to the INS. The judge argued that the immigration court should decide whether *Abu Marzouk should stay or leave the US* where he has studied and lived for years.

Abu Marzouk reportedly responded by saying: "Why should you keep me in jail to determine whether I should leave when I want to leave (the country)". But the judge replied that *it was no* longer her case and should go to the INS.

Abu Marzouk's lawyers believe that the judge acted under pressure from the government prosecutors. Bassiouni said that government representatives met with the judge twice to discuss the case days before the actual court hearing. "The government went behind the back of the defence to confer with the judge twice," Bassiouni said.

Most observers had expected that Abu Marzouk would be re*leased and sent to Amman where he would like to live.* Jordanian officials told the *Weekly* that King Hussein reiterated to the American government during his visit to Washington that Jordan was ready to allow Abu Marzouk to live in Amman. But the US government *has apparently decided to seek his official deportation* based on the anti-terrorism law.

The American refusal to release Abu Marzouk has ignited concern in the Arab American community that the government wants to use Abu Marzouk's trial as a test case for the controversial anti-terrorism law. The law, which was enacted in 1995 amid strong opposition by human and civil rights groups here, allows the government to detain and deport immigrants if it decides that they are affiliated, in one way or another, with "terrorist organisations".

The Anti-Terrorism Bill, *as the law is named, also entitles the* government not to disclose its evidence or information against the *accused person or people, rendering it difficult for the defence to* rebut the charges. Consequently, if Abu Marzouk is deported on the basis of the Anti-Terrorism Bill, his case would be a precedent paving the way for similar future measures against immigrant support groups that the US describes as "terrorist".

To date, no Arab American has ever been deported on the basis of affiliation or support for groups deemed as "terrorist" in the US government dictionary. In fact, the American government effort to deport seven Palestinian Americans and one Kenyan for their support of the *Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine* (PFLP) has been in court for the last 12 years. Last week a court *in California reversed the decision against two of the group who* were accused by the FBI of plotting to sabotage *the LA Olympic* Games. The court found no evidence against them but the FBI kept on renewing the charges. However, under the Anti-Terrorism *Bill* a deportation is possible without evidence that could be revealed or substantiated in court.

Defence Counsel Bassiouni, who has played a key role in investigating the war crimes in Bosnia, believes that the procrastination could *be deliberate* to give the Israeli government a chance to renew its extradition demand once the situation in the West Bank allows it. Meanwhile, *Abu Marzouk* remains in the custody of the INS, which is expected to apply a controversial procedure known as exclusion. The *procedure* has been applied before to refugees or immigrants who were suspected of posing a 'security risk' to the US. It allows the government to keep sus*pects detained* indefinitely while denying them the right of bail.

Ironically, Abu Marzouk had effectively pre-empted such action by the INS by withdrawing, immediately after his detention, his application to re-enter the US. By withdrawing his application, Abu Marzouk had legally agreed to his 'exclusion' from entering the country — even though his family lives in the US.

But US authorities have introduced new demands requiring a confession that he is 'a terrorist', ignoring its laws and his lawyers' arguments that Abu Marzouk *should* be considered a 'political detainee'. Defence lawyers are determined to fight for his release but they believe that Abu Marzouk's *future will heavily depend on the political events in the region.*

Baker heads to the Sahara

US former Secretary of State James Baker will be visiting the Western Sahara later this month to hold talks with various parties. **Rasha Saad** reports

Early last month, the former US secretary of state, James Baker, was named as the personal envoy of UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan for Western Sahara, a region beset by *trouble since* Spain's withdrawal in 1976. Baker's appointment has been welcomed by all the parties concerned. He is viewed in the region as a shrewd politician and peacemaker.

The UN mediator is expected to *visit the region soon for talks with the* Moroccan government, the leadership of the Polisario and the governments of Algeria and Mauritania.

A spokesman for Annan said Baker would assess whether the UN proposals to hold a referendum could *be implemented in their present form* or whether adjustments are needed.

For years, the United Nations has been trying to organise a referendum, originally set for January 1992, to decide whether the Western Sahara should be incorporated into Morocco or become independent, as demanded by the Algerian-backed Polisario.

Observers believe that the best solution to the 20-year conflict, would be through granting Polisario self-rule under Morocco's sovereignty.

According to Mohamed El-Sayed Said, deputy director of Al-Ahram Centre for Political and Strategic Studies, Baker is a good choice for the job. "Though he is not charismatic, he has a presence and international weight. His dynamic abilities will surely benefit the issue," he said.

A UN plan to hold a referendum in Western Sahara has been postponed repeatedly in the past due to disagreement between Morocco and the Polisario over the issue of who would be eligible to vote.

The Polisario Front objected to the census of 1974 — conducted just before Spain withdrew from the *territory — which put the population* at 74,000, claiming that the true number is nearly one million.

Morocco, for its part, accused the Polisario of inflating the number by including illegal immigrants from neighbouring African countries. *Morocco also insisted that about* 120,000 Sahrawis who were forced to leave the Sahara in 1958, due to massacres perpetrated by Spanish and French troops, should be given the right to vote.

Observers suspect the Polisario of purposely dragging its feet in the negotiations for fear that the outcome *of a referendum will not be in its* favour. This suspicion is based on a number of reasons. Morocco, the Polisario's adversary, has put its house in order. It no longer suffers from the domestic turmoil it suffered in the '70s. Algeria, the Polisario's traditional supporter, is having domestic trouble. The Algerians look forward to stronger ties with Morocco, through which they hope to export gas to Europe. Thanks to heavy Moroccan investment, economic conditions in the Western Sahara have improved, alleviating many past grievances.

And, there is news of a split within the leadership of the Polisario. Its leading figures are said to have fled to Morocco, where they are being well treated.

The Polisario is also feeling the crunch of international isolation. The sole external legitimate presence in their self-styled republic is that of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU), which has admitted the republic as a member.

هكذا من الأصل

هكذا من الأصل

For the love of diamonds

With the imminent fall of Zaire's Mobutu and the partial eclipse of Angola's Savimbi, the West is learning to do business with revolutionaries, writes **Gamal Nkrumah**

"Mobutuism has no future. Now we have to see how to get to a transitional government," warned Belgian Foreign Minister Erik Derycke last week. Belgium, Zaire's former colonial master, is the African country's main trading partner. *The United States* is Zaire's second largest trading partner followed by France. Two-way trade between *France and Zaire is only $71 million. But France was, in* recent years, Zairean President Mobutu Sese Seku's most ardent supporter and military backer. France, unlike Belgium and the US, has some 8,200 troops in Africa. All three have dumped Mobutu, *Zaire's absolute ruler for the* past 32 years.

Why beat about the bush? Africa is slipping out of the right-wing dictators' grasp. American officials have expressed concern about the political ambitions of Laurent Desire Kabila, the leader of the Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo-Zaire (ADFL). "I'm not very clear as to the democratic intentions of Kabila," Republican Congressman Robert Menendez, of the House International Relations Sub-Committee on Africa, warned *in Washington last week. "I think that [Zaire] needs* change very badly," US Ambassador to Zaire Daniel Simpson *is reported to have told Likulia Bolongo, recently ap*pointed by Mobutu as prime minister.

Cité, the rundown shanty town where many of the poorest of Kinshasa's five million inhabitants live, is a hotbed of revolution. The vast majority of Cité's residents are yearning for change. "Mobutu must go. Kabila must come," they told reporters this week.

In the affluent Binza district where those Zaireans who have benefited most from Zaire's bungled development policies reside, there is an *unmistakable air of apprehension.*

An African diplomat, speaking on condition of anonymity, told *Al-Ahram Weekly* that, "rich Zaireans have adopted a guarded outlook regarding Kabila. They see him sporting a Mao [Zedong] cap. They remember how he made money by running gold and ivory smuggling rackets *in eastern Zaire. They have heard about his recent dealings* with Western companies — Zaire produces 70 per cent of the world's cobalt and 30 *per cent of its copper.*"

The real gloom merchants have expressed grave doubts about Kabila's moral standing and feel that he cannot unite the vast country. But that is irrelevant today. "Zaire and its riches are his for the taking," the African diplomat said.

Last Thursday, the ADFL captured Zaire's second largest city, Lubumbashi — capital of the mineral-rich province of *Shaba, formerly Katanga. The ADFL* overran the regional capitals of Mbandaka and Bandundu. They met *with little resistance and were received by jubilant crowds in both* places, as they were in Lubumbashi. The ADFL were also cheered in Kisangani and Mbuji-Mayi, Zaire's diamond mining centre.

In neighbouring mineral-rich Angola, the swearing-in of 28 ministers and 55 deputy ministers, including 11 officials from the opposition party UNITA, took place at a ceremony at the Palacio dos Congressos last Friday. *South Africa's* President Nelson Mandela, who wants peace in both Angola and Zaire, was among a co*terie of African leaders present at the ceremony. If at first you* cannot shut them out, then invite them in. That in a nutshell has been the Angolan government's approach to UNITA. All Mobutu and UNITA leader Jonas Savimbi can do now is accept the fact that they are no longer the West's blue-eyed boys.

The Angolan civil war erupted on the eve of independence from Portugal in 1975. Armed with Soviet weapons, Cuban troops fought alongside the army of the then *Marxist MPLA* government. The Americans and South Africans backed UNITA in a *classic Cold War era conflict. The war was brought to a halt in* 1991, but resumed a year later after an American-brokered peace agreement was discarded when UNITA lost general elections. Like Mobutu, Jonas Savimbi, UNITA's leader, became redundant to Western allies when the Cold War came to an abrupt end in 1989.

Democracy is making impressive inroads and fast gaining converts in Africa, but populism, of the Kabila variety, is casting a far wider net. What is extraordinary is that such a sweeping *change in Zaire could have happened with the broad support of* Western powers. Whoever said the armed struggle in Africa led nowhere? The painstaking efforts of the ADFL have also paid dividends. Western companies are clamouring for Kabila. Western multinationals know that there is little harm in a handover.

Time is running out for Mobutu. This week, the ADFL said they were approaching the Zairean capital Kinshasa and advised foreign nationals to evacuate the city. An estimated *500* Americans remain in Kinshasa. Kabila has sent an ultimatum to Mobutu *asking him to resign and offering him the option of retiring* to his hometown of Gbadolite, northwestern Zaire. US and Belgian efforts to convince Mobutu to step down were rejected by the ailing Zairean president. In a last-ditch attempt to convince Mobutu to resign, Congolese President Pascal Lissouba crossed the Zaire-Congo river to talk to Mobutu.

Throughout Africa, efforts are intensifying to find African solutions to African crises. Mobutu, who in the past called for the creation of a League of Black African Nations to counteract Arab *incursions into Sub-Saharan Africa, had Israeli personal* bodyguards and Belgian, French and Moroccan troops to quell regional rebellions in 1977 and 1978. As far as his former Western backers were concerned, Mobutu put their sudden change of heart towards his regime down to greed. "It's because of copper, cobalt, gold and diamonds that they now favour Kabila," he told reporters in Kinshasa this week. Complaining about Angolan, Ugandan and Rwandan assistance to Kabila, he added, "It's all because of the diamonds that they arm Kabila. It is not for the love of Zaire."



Zairean President Mobutu Sese Seku, at a press conference in Kinshasa, reaches the end of his tether (photo: AFP)

Death of a rebel?

How revolutionary was Allen Ginsberg, the much-maligned guru of the American left, asks **Jooneed Khan**

True to their departed guru's flamboyant knack for publicity at a time when post-war America saw the spread of mass advertising and TV culture, devotees of poet Allen Ginsberg were quick to post *tens of celebratory Memorial Web pages* on the Internet after the "Father of Beat" passed away at his New York home on April *5. He was* 70 and had been diagnosed with untreatable liver cancer.

It was only natural that the Beat generation groupies would shift from the Great American Road to the Information Super-Highway. The roadstops are chock-full of links to sharp and informed literary material about Ginsberg; his cronies such as Jack Kerouac, William Burroughs, Gregory Corso and Lawrence Ferlinghetti; and about *their inspirers — the major* ones being William Blake, Walt Whitman, Arthur Rimbaud and Jean Genet.

Ginsberg, born in 1926 in Newark, New Jersey, in a modest middle-class Jewish family, went on to become an icon of the American counter-culture that exploded into the make-love-not-war and drug-laced hippie movement of the *Vietnam War years, and then mutated into the* Gay Liberation movement. Therefore, these Memorial Web pages all have a very American mix of eat-my-dust hardness and touchy-feely candour.

True, Ginsberg's first major work, *Howl*, an incantation denouncing the American nightmare and celebrating drugs and homosexuality, was quickly impounded. His publisher, *Ferlighetti, was charged with obscenity when the book came* out in 1956, as the US was emerging from the dark night of McCarthyism.

Instantly, *Howl* became the manifesto of the Beat generation, who were first known as beatniks and later as hippies during the Vietnam War years. The obscenity charge only helped to popularise the work since the judge ultimately ruled that it was not without "redeeming social importance".

It also earned him the interest of the FBI, whose boss, J. Edgar *Hoover, it turns out, was himself a closet homosexual.* In any event, the FBI placed Ginsberg on a Dangerous Subversive Internal Security list in 1965, the poet told one researcher in 1988. The Reagan administration's drive against obscenity in the 1980s led the Pacifica Radio Network to ban much of Ginsberg's poetry, including *Howl* and *Kaddish*, an elegy to his mother who sank into madness and died after a lobotomy.

As the post-war baby boomers emerged from adolescence in the 1960s to face the draft for the Vietnam War, Ginsberg *toured Asia and became a fixture of the protest movements in* the US. He participated in the Acid Test Festivals in San Francisco; made contact with the Beatles and linked up with Bob Dylan; chanted 'Om' at the San Francisco Be-In in 1967; joined the anti-war protests at the Chicago Democratic Convention in 1968. He adopted Buddhism in 1970, and even joined the punk rock movement in the 1980s, appearing on The Clash's *Combat Rock* album and performing with them on stage.

Yet, Allen Ginsberg was never a real threat to the American system, as the Black Power movement was or even the Chicago Seven and the Weather Underground. LeRoi Jones fought back against American racism as Imamu Amiri Baraka. Cassius Clay became Mohamed Ali and lost the three best years of his life as the world's greatest heavyweight boxer for his refusal to fight a "white man's war" in Vietnam. Malcolm X and Martin Luther King were both assassinated and the Black Panthers were hounded, killed or jailed.

Howard *Zinn, going back to the 1930s, quotes Langston* Hughes "What happens to a dream deferred" and "I, too, sing America / I am the darker brother". Writing about the anti-war movement over Vietnam, he mentions Robert Lowell and Arthur Miller, Daniel Ellsberg and Anthony Russo, the Berrigan Brothers and Angela Davis, Bob Dylan and Joan Baez, among others, but he leaves out Allen Ginsberg completely.

The problem with Ginsberg's Howl was that while it attacked the law and order, repressive puritanical system, it celebrated individualism and hedonism to excess. This was the very core principle of the culture of mass consumerism spreading around the poet. The idea was to keep the individuals' "pursuit of happiness" tied to the satisfaction of their material and sensual needs, by artificially whetting their appetites if need be, so that they would lose interest in any form of community or collective organisation aimed at overthrowing or even changing the system. *Discipline and sacrifice for the common* good were never part of Ginsberg's vocabulary, and Jean-Paul Sartre, or even Albert Camus, never a cultivated inspiration.

Ginsberg did march against the Vietnam War, the CIA and the Shah of Iran, and did chant "Hare Krishna" on arch-conservative William F. Buckley Jr.'s TV programme. However, he never hit it off with foreign governments: he managed to get kicked out of *Cuba, India, Czechoslovakia and* China at the height of the Cold War.

For one, his celebration of homosexuality and drugs did not sit well with these governments. His uncompromising stand on personal freedom smacked of the same American meddling mentality which today finds expression in the nominal but very public crusade for the rights of women and children in the Third World. "The US is now saying that if the Third World is poor and underdeveloped, it's because the men oppress the women, *not because of systemic North-South inequality," said one* grassroots worker from Bangladesh in Montreal recently.

Tiphaine Dickson, a feisty young Canadian woman lawyer for one of the Hutu defendants at the International Penal Tribunal for Rwanda in Arusha, Tanzania, is as concerned. "The so-called American Left of the 1960s and 1970s is now on the cutting edge of US intervention in Africa, as staff for NGOs and *various international agencies," she says.* "They self-righteously believe, just as the American Right did in Vietnam, that they represent a superior culture and they have the right to 'civilise' the Third World, and they are now doing it with the full backing of the State apparatus of the US superpower," she adds.

The ideological fuzziness of the "American Left", which ensures that it is much more "American" than it is "Left", is *indeed a hallmark of Allen Ginsberg's American odyssey* through the 20th century. His father, Louis, was a moderate Jewish socialist and poet, and his mother, Naomi, a communist from Russia, and a nudist. Jack Kerouac, of French-Canadian working class origins in Lowell, Massachusetts, turned against the *hippies* and supported the Vietnam War, and William Burroughs, scion of a patrician industrialist family from *Missouri, was no friend of women or Blacks — but like* Ginsberg, they were both homosexual, and lived on drugs.

Testifying before a Senate committee in 1966, Ginsberg said, "If we want to discourage the use of LSD for altering our attitudes, we'll have to encourage such changes in our society that nobody will need to take it to break through to common sympathy." In a letter to his father in 1957, he wrote that "Whitman long ago complained that unless the material power in America were leavened by some common kind of spiritual infusion, we would wind up among the 'fabled damned'. We're approaching that state as far as I can see."

This purpose he never achieved. His best work was probably *Kaddish*, the loving elegy to his mother whose funeral in New York he missed in 1956 because he was then living in Berkeley. *His National Book Award in 1973*, Robert Frost Medal in 1968, American Book Award in 1990 and Pulitzer Prize short-list mention in 1995 confirmed him as a "respectable" writer, not an enemy of the system. He provoked the Establishment by living his life as an ongoing mystical psychotherapy show, engined by a syncretic mish-mash of Americanism, Judaism, Hinduism, Buddhism and Western literature which never fused into *anything* original. However, his voice remained silent over the post-Cold War global disorder and with America's place at the apex of the planetary pyramid.

"People ask me if I've gone respectable now. I tell them I've always been respectable," he told one interviewer recently. To be respectable, to be respected and accepted by America as a homosexual seem to have been one of his deeper yearnings. "America, I'm putting my queer *shoulder to the wheel*," he once wrote.

Facing up to the fascist plague

As Jean-Marie Le Pen's Front National convenes an international conference in Strasbourg, leftists join ranks in protest demonstrations and feelings among the city's residents run high, writes **Hosni Abdel-Rehim** from Strasbourg

It is no secret that Jean-Marie Le Pen, leader of *the fascist party Le Front National* (FN), is aiming for political power. This was especially apparent after the party scored a major victory in February by winning the mayoral elections of Vitrolles, a bleak and depressed town near Marseilles. Vitrolles was the fourth town captured by the FN in southern France, following their *victories in the municipal elections of* Marignane, Orange and Toulon. "Who can say the FN is not capable of becoming the leading political party in France?" Le Pen boasted after Vitrolles.

Two weeks ago in Strasbourg, the FN convened a conference of major European fascist parties, *with high-profile representation* from Russia, Romania and Belgium. The French au*thorities, however, denied* the Serbian representative an entry visa, following accusations of participation in crimes against humanity during the civil war in Serbia.

In Strasbourg, the chief item on the agenda was to discuss the FN's political election platform. Bruno Megret, vice-chairman of the FN, *whose wife Catherine won* the Vitrolles mayorship, declared that the Front provided a viable and popular alternative to the current corruption and incompetence decimating parties of both the right and the left. Pierre Milloz, chairing the meeting, said: "We are against those thieves and we shall get rid of them once we assume power." During the debate on *immigration*, one of the delegates demanded that French nationality be withdrawn from anybody demonstrating against the Front's planned "Francophone" ethnic cleansing policies. Another delegate suggested that every immigrant should be fingerprinted upon arrival. At the end of the conference, Le Pen was unanimously elected FN president for a second term. He was the sole *candidate running for election to that post.*

Last month, opinion polls indicated increasing support for the FN's racist ideology which scapegoats immigrants of Arab and African origin for France's major economic and social problems. The record-high youth unemployment figures, reaching 25 per cent for young males under 25 and more than 30 per cent for young females in the same age group, *in addition to the climate of insecurity caused* by rampant crime rates, have led many people to espouse the FN's virulent solutions.

Believing that the Front will solve the unemployment and social crises, which were triggered by the economic policies of *both the* Socialists and the Conservatives, some 15 per cent *of the French voted for Le Pen in the* 1995 presidential elections.

"Today, immigration, unemployment and AIDS pose a real threat to the liberty and security of the French people and to the very security of France. The National Front sees itself as the stronghold and bastion of national identity *against cosmopolitan projects aimed at mixing* people and their culture," reads Le Pen's platform.

Following the Front's success story in Vitrolles, both the right and the left started to mobilise against what they commonly referred to as "the plague". As a result, the left, socialist and communist parties, along with the Greens, formed a "National Committee of Vigilance" to *combat the FN offensive and suggested that the* Conservatives establish a "Republican Front" for the same purpose. The idea is to challenge and defeat the FN candidates in next year's legislative elections.

As soon as the FN announced their intention to hold a meeting in Strasbourg, the left went on the counter-offensive. *Some 97* organisations closed ranks to form the "*Rassemblement pour la Justice et la Liberté*" — beginning preparations for three days of demonstrations and marches starting 28 March.

In all parts of France, political parties, trade unions and human rights groups rented trains *and bus-convoys to take protesters to* Strasbourg. Leading the Socialist delegation were Jack Lang, *former minister of culture*, and Henri Emanuel, chief of the Socialist Parliamentarian Group.

At Kleber Square in Strasbourg, Mayor Catherine Trautmann, whom the FN had previously sued for denying them the right to rent a town hall, greeted the protesters along with *Robert Hue, secretary of the Communist* Party, and Dominique Vonet, leader of the Greens. These luminaries then marched with more than 70,000 demonstrators to protest against racism and express their solidarity with the immigrant community. Throughout the march, Arab and African musicians sang national liberation songs, ending with Algerian singer Khaled's new Franco-Arab hit *Aicha, Aicha.*

A number of Strasbourg residents found a new formula to dramatise their outrage. Refusing to remain in a city that agreed to provide the stage for a racist convention, they crossed the border *into* Germany where they remained until the FN left town. Meanwhile, protesters *from neighbouring Germany, Switzerland, Italy* and Belgium travelled to Strasbourg to join the anti-fascist march.

At the end of the day, some leaders of the nascent anti-fascist movement believed they had successfully combated the Front in Strasbourg. "This is a victory for the people. The *march proves they are opposed to racial* discrimination," stated Socialist leader Lionel Jospin. Jack Lang called the march "a very warm demonstration of brotherhood. The French came from all parts of France, moved by their belief in freedom." The archbishop of Paris, Cardinal Lustiger, declared that it was his "duty to revive a spirit of anti-violence without being pulled into arguments." The leader of the Greens stressed that it was imperative for the progressive movement to join forces in order to challenge the FN successfully in the upcoming election battle.

Beyond the official version of the Strasbourg march, I was able to test the success rate of the *Rassemblement pour la Justice et la Liberté* with its immigrant constituency. On my way back to Paris, I asked a young Algerian immigrant what he thought of it all. "I used to believe all French people were racist. After this demonstration I don't believe it any more," said the youth, adding, "I know now that the *FN* must be opposed by any means — by all of us."

Moscow woos Islamic world

Russia has snubbed the West for bullying Iran, and has signed new deals with the country instead, writes **Abdel-Malik Khalil** from Moscow

On the occasion of the *Eid Al-Adha*, Moscow witnessed a unique celebration of Islamic culture which coincided with the visit of the Iranian Speaker of Parliament, Nategh Nouri.

A seminar on *The Holy Qur'an in Russia: Spiritual Heritage and Historical Relevance* took place at the headquarters of the professional associations and trade unions on Monday.

It is the first time in Russian history that the Qur'an has been honoured in such a high-profile fashion. A coterie of international celebrities, orientalists, Muslim *ulema*, and African, Asian and European Muslim intellectuals and academics attended the event, along with leading figures from *the Russian* Federation's outlying Muslim regions and autonomous republics.

Participants *flew to the predominantly* Muslim republic of Daghestan, one of the half dozen Muslim autonomous republics, on Tuesday.

Nouri's visit comes at a time of tension between Iran and Germany and other European Union countries over the ruling by a Berlin court which implicated Iranian leaders in terrorist attacks and assassination attempts on dissident Iranian and Kurdish political refugees in Germany. The Berlin court said that Tehran ordered the murders of Iranian *Kurdish dissidents in 1992.*

As EU nations withdraw their diplomats from Iran and condemn Iranian state-sponsored terrorism, Russia's cultural, economic and political links to Tehran continue to grow closer. Nouri received a standing ovation when he spoke to Russian parliamentarians.

Russian President Boris Yeltsin met Nouri and told reporters at *a press conference afterwards, "Our cooperation with Iran is con*structive and has wide ramifications. We are now consolidating and cementing our ties with Iran, but in the near future we shall witness the deepening of our bilateral relations.".

The two countries have agreed in principle to work together for the development of the fisheries and mineral resources of the Caspian Sea. Iran and Russia share the Caspian Sea with Azerbaijan, Turkmenstan and Kazakhstan.

Both Russia and Iran oppose Azerbaijan's plans to forge deals with Western petroleum corporations concerning the exploitation of the region's vast oil reserves. Nouri warned that Azerbaijani President Geidar Aliyev was "committing an historic mistake by *laying the basis for American interference in the affairs of coun*tries bordering the Caspian Sea." British Petroleum and American oil giant Amoco hold the largest stakes in the $7.5 billion international project signed in September 1994 to develop three offshore Azerbaijani oil fields.

Russia and Iran are cooperating closely in the field of high-tech industries, agriculture, and mineral exploitation. The two sides *also explored closer cooperation in other fields including nuclear* technologies. Nategh Nouri and Russian Foreign Minister Yegveny Primakov signed a joint memorandum on export controls, including a pledge to abide by international regulations aimed at halting the spread of weapons of mass destruction. The United States and other Western nations expressed concern that the transfer of Russian nuclear technology to Iran could help the Islamic Republic to develop nuclear weapons.

Edited by **Gamal Nkrumah**

Al-Ahram Weekly

Duplicity and diatribe

When it comes to duplicity, the US's Middle East policy is unrivaled. No sooner had a German court handed down a verdict against four Iranians for the murder of three Kurdish dissidents and their translator in Bonn, than the US urged the members of the EU to sever ties with Iran. The rationale behind the US's demand — punishing a state which sponsors terrorism — would have been noble, did it not seem so ludicrous; after all, the US opts for silence when it comes to Israel's treatment of the Palestinians and other Arabs.

Months ago, when the Israeli Supreme Court approved the use of shaking as an interrogation tool against suspected Palestinian radicals, the US said nothing. US objections were no more forthcoming when the Israelis massacred over 100 Lebanese civilians in Qana. Nor was this bastion of democracy any more vociferous when a Jewish settler murdered a young Palestinian schoolboy months ago, or when Israeli forces this week attempted to raid PA security offices in the West Bank. Neither last nor least, little was said, save for some conciliatory remarks and veiled admonitions, when Netanyahu gave the order for construction to begin on Jebel Abu Ghneim. The US, in fact, in keeping with its goal of stabilising the region, brilliantly vetoed two UN Security Council resolutions condemning this act.

Still, the Clinton administration maintains that it is committed to a just and comprehensive peace in the region. In US *diplomatic parlance, this peace can only be realised through* preventive diplomacy and containment policies. If the parties involved will not cede to US-Israeli demands, conditions or "advice", then the increasingly popular political tools of the 1990s, economic sanctions and trade embargoes, will be used. Iraq has had a taste of this medicine, as has Libya. Oddly enough, however, neither country seems ready to back down as a result.

Would peace in the region not be more lasting if it did not so blatantly serve Israel and the US, while ignoring the other participants in the process?

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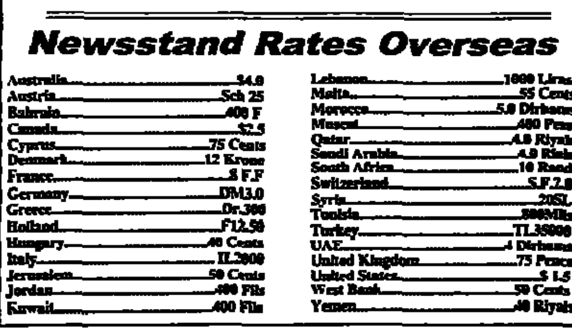
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Eastward bound

Asia's successful economies offer both opportunities and a possible model for sustained growth, writes **Ibrahim Nafie**

It is a common mistake to assume that economic progress and development can be achieved only by following the Western model, a perspective that ignores the remarkable economic achievements of many Asian countries.

President Hosni Mubarak's recent visit to the Far East and Prime Minister Kamal El-Ganzouri's tour of Malaysia, Singapore and China signals a shift, though, in this traditional perspective. Many international financial organisations believe that if Asia's economic growth continues to develop at its current rates Asian domestic product will outstrip that of the Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) within just two decades.

Some commentators go as far as to predict a gradual shift in the centres of economic influence towards Japan and China, a process that has been given greater impetus by the revitalisation of the Chinese economy.

What lessons does the Asian experience hold for Egypt, particularly at this stage of its economic development? Certainly, the momentum of Asian progress has been sustained by juggling domestic concerns with clear sighted policies aimed at overcoming the practical hurdles in the way of Asian goods penetrating world markets. And the key feature of these policies has been their pragmatism.

Asia's economic policies have not been subject to dogmatic ideology, and Asian governments have been careful to ensure the high degree of flexibility that has enabled them to quickly shift course if certain policies proved ineffective.

Government intervention has given a major impetus to the economic performance of Asian countries, giving the lie to the commonly held belief that state intervention causes more problems than it solves. The experience of the Asian economies clearly demonstrates that government intervention can facilitate the growth of an export-oriented economy, securing a competitive advantage for domestically manufactured products, providing, of course, there is a realistic assessment of international market trends.

The key to successfully steering investment towards structural adjustment is the creation of a dynamic climate for growth. It is in this context that selective government intervention, facilitating the process of industrialisation, can pay the greatest dividends, offering a viable alternative to the dogmas of economic deregulation and free market orientation. In practice, this involves significant coordination between the private and public sectors, with the government acting as an incentive generator rather than a power barrier.

I do not mean to suggest, however, that the solution to all our economic problems lies in blindly imitating the Asian model. On the contrary, it is essential for us to remain objectively critical in order to select those elements that are best suited to our particular circumstances. But this in turn means that Egypt must seek the opportunity to learn first hand from direct contact with the most important economic success stories of the 20th century. Herein lies the vital importance of President Mubarak's and Prime Minister Ganzouri's recent visits to the Far East.

In spite of the remarkable economic and commercial development engineered by the countries of Asia, Egypt has yet to orient itself towards a more vigorous commercial interaction with their economies. Egypt currently faces a growing trade deficit with the Asian economies, a reflection of the half-hearted approach by Egyptian manufacturers in exploring the potential of Asian markets at a time when Egyptian products are facing growing restrictions in their traditional markets in Europe and the US. The volume of Egyptian exports to the three countries on Ganzouri's Asian tour does not exceed $160 million per year, less than three per cent of the total volume of Egypt's annual exports and less than 0.05 per cent of the volume of the annual import trade of those countries. Fortunately, the efforts of the Egyptian delegation accompanying Ganzouri on his visit offered new opportunities for promoting Egyptian commercial relations with these countries and redressing the balance of trade deficit. Indeed, this visit is expected to yield several agreements that will broaden the scope of economic interaction for the mutual benefit of the countries concerned.

The importance of these countries to Egypt also resides in the fact that they are now major capital exporters and therefore constitute the largest future source for the direct flow of foreign investment towards developing countries. Egypt, which has already made significant progress in its economic reform programme, needs at this juncture to maximise direct foreign investments so as to realise its target of increasing annual growth to seven per cent. Realistically, Egypt will not be able to achieve this target by relying on domestic savings alone. Indeed, in order to reach this target it must attract foreign capital at a rate of about $10 billion per year, as opposed to the $2 billion of investment secured in the last 12 months. It is wise, therefore, to look beyond traditional sources of investment in the West and capitalise on opportunities to attract investments from Asia.

Circumstances are at the moment propitious for generating the qualitative shift in our relations with Asia's economies necessary if we are to realise diversification in both the geographic configuration of export markets and sources of investment. One factor in our favour, in particular, is that the countries of Asia, especially Singapore and China, are increasingly focussing their attention on this region as their primary source of petroleum. That the Middle East contains more than two-thirds of the world's known petroleum reserves is ample reason for them to be concerned with the stability of the region and to seek to solidify their relations with Egypt, the most strategically central country of the region and its fulcrum of stability. Many Asian countries, in fact, have for the first time in their history entered into the field of oil exploration in several countries of the Middle East, including Egypt, with many economists predicting that Asia will supplant Europe as the primary importer of Middle Eastern oil by the beginning of the next century.

Liquidating the peace process

Mohamed Sid-Ahmed analyses why the peace process has sunk to its lowest ebb yet

While the issue of peace in the Middle East is still coming in for a great deal of international *attention and is the subject of intensive discussions* at the highest levels, including the White House in Washington, when it comes to the realities on the ground, the only thing happening is the continued construction of new settlements in the occupied Arab territories, most notoriously on Jebel Abu Ghneim in Arab East Jerusalem. In reply to a question on how to defuse the crisis provoked by the controversial Har Homa settlement, Jerusalem's Likud mayor Ehud Olmert said that as tempers were running high because of the heavy police presence required to maintain security, the best way out of this volatile situation was to end the security problem as quickly as possible by speeding up construction!

Even before coming to power, Netanyahu was openly opposed to the Madrid peace process based on Security Council Resolution 242, which is now interpreted as meaning the exchange of land for peace. When Netanyahu announced that he was replacing the 'land for peace' tradeoff by a 'peace for peace' tradeoff, it was not immediately clear what this meant. The first clue that helped unravel the mystery was the slogan he had raised during his election campaign: 'Security before peace'.

In other words, Netanyahu's 'peace for peace' tradeoff was a 'security for security' tradeoff — with one basic difference between the two terms of the equation: in one case, it was the security of the state of Israel that was to be guaranteed, in the other, it was the security of the Arab regimes. This implicitly meant that Netanyahu was prepared to ensure the military security of Arab regimes ready to guarantee Israel's security, that is, along the lines of the protection Israel now offers the pro-Israeli quisling regime in south Lebanon. It would also furnish such regimes with economic security by ensuring their incorporation into the new 'globalist' world order, encouraged by the West in general and the US in particular.

Of course, repudiating the Madrid peace process in general entailed repudiating the Oslo Accords as well, and for a certain time Netanyahu made no secret of his opposition to those agreements. However, he now claims to be the only party observing their provisions and accuses the *Palestinians of violating them! As an expression* of his commitment to the Oslo Accords, Netanyahu signed the Hebron agreement a few weeks before his visit to Washington last February. Clinton congratulated him for 'having come back' to the peace process, and rewarded him generously by offering Israel a new package of sophisticated weapons that ensured its continued military superiority over all the Arab states taken together.

Eight committees were created to implement the Hebron agreement, but none ever convened. When construction commenced on the Har Homa settlement, a Hamas suicide squad killed three Israeli women in Tel Aviv. The event was used as a pretext to freeze the activities of the eight committees indefinitely. Thus the Hebron agreement did not attest to Netanyahu's readiness to resume the peace process; rather, it served as justification for replenishing Israel's military arsenals.

The last summit between Netanyahu and Clinton a few days ago witnessed an attempt by Netanyahu to take his strategy towards the negotiation process one step further. According to press reports, he no longer limits his approach to substantive issues such as the 'peace for peace' tradeoff, but is now also talking about procedural matters. A few weeks before his latest visit to Washington, Netanyahu came up with the idea of reducing the time-frame for the final stage of the Palestinian-Israeli negotiations from two years to six months. During his meeting with Clinton, he proposed convening an Israeli-Palestinian-American summit along the lines of the Sadat-Begin-Carter Camp David summit, which presupposes keeping the negotiations going until a final agreement is reached. Clinton dismissed the proposal as premature in the context of the present deterioration of trust between the protagonists. Indeed, how can the most intractable issues of the conflict, namely, Jerusalem, final borders, the settlements, Palestinian self-determination and statehood, Palestinian right of return, water, the environment, etc. be solved in a matter of days when issues that were much less controversial took years to resolve?

Netanyahu can of course argue that Clinton himself was defending that approach by resorting twice to the US veto in the Security Council. Clinton made it clear that the vetoes did not imply Washington's approval of the Har Homa settlement, only its insistence that the international community be kept out of the negotiation process and that Israeli-Palestinian differences be settled by the protagonists themselves. As Netanyahu sees it, that is totally in line with a Camp David-style summit.

Netanyahu was probably banking on the idea that many in the Arab world were beginning to see the continued impasse over the Palestinian problem as a destabilising factor for the region as a whole and wanted a way to be found out of the impasse as soon as possible. He is probably also banking on undeclared changes now underway in the peace process itself. When the negotiations first began in Madrid, they were divided into two tracks: first, the bilateral, which was to negotiate the key 'land for peace;' tradeoff, and an additional multilateral track which was to consolidate the former by resorting to what could be described as a globalist approach, i.e., turning to the world community to help solve the critical issues of Jerusalem, disarmament, refugees, the environment, economic relations between the protagonists, etc. With the present impasse over the 'land for peace' tradeoff, it seems that it is the second track that has acquired pre-eminence and on which Netanyahu is betting to liquidate the Palestinian problem through some speedy 'solution' of the issue in a Camp David-like setting.

In preparation for such a 'final solution', Netanyahu recently met Peres in secret to probe whether a coalition government is possible between the two main Israeli parties. This raises the question of how the Arab parties will react to these developments, and what specific demands they intend to put to the Clinton administration whose only unambiguous stand so far has been the two vetoes it issued to prevent the Security Council from condemning the construction of the Har Homa settlement in Arab Jerusalem.

Yesterday's feasts

By Naguib Mahfouz



During my childhood days, the rituals of the feast began at dawn, with the slaughter of the lamb and the breakfast meal, which was a real treat. I still recall my annual supplication: every year, I would beg my father to spare the lamb's life, if only that year. The lamb would arrive one or two weeks before the feast, a period long enough for me to make his acquaintance and grow accustomed to his presence in the family. I fed him, rode him like cowboys rode bucking broncos in films, and grew more fond of him each day he spent on the roof of our house.

I never failed to make appeals on his behalf; nor did I ever lose hope that my parents might give in and spare his life. I was always certain that, at the last moment, something would happen and my wish would come true. The moment always came when my hope was defeated, however.

Breakfast followed shortly after the slaughter. We were treated to grilled meat, a delicacy which was absent from our normal diet on uneventful days of the year. After breakfast, we took to the streets and alleys, playing with our neighbours in new clothes bought for the feast. This new, carefree life lasted for three or four days. The cinema was one of the places we found especially attractive on feast days. We usually went to Cinema Cosmo, but not by tram as was customary on normal days. We rode in a carriage pulled by two horses.

In the evening, we usually went to hear a famous singer like Saleh Abdel-Hay, Abdel-Wahab or Umm Kulthoum, if a concert was held on the occasion of the feast. In this manner, we managed to enjoy the day thoroughly from sunrise until late at night.

Recently, the feast day has become just another day, a day to go for a walk with my wife and two daughters. But the feast which meant so much to me as a child has vanished.

Based on an interview by Mohamed Salmawy.

The Press This Week

Butcher and whip master

Al-Shaab: "The US should know that the person who has to take confidence building measures is Clinton and not Netanyahu, in whom nobody, not even the Israelis, have confidence. As for Clinton, US interests and *its world image require him to tell the truth and avoid* ambiguity. Otherwise, Arab masses as well as world public opinion will lump him together with Netanyahu. The latter will go down in history as an adventurer. Clinton, if the peace process collapses during his term, will be seen as a suicide case."
(*Mahgoub Omar*, 8 April)

Al-Ahram: "The Arabs are fed up! They see the Israeli butcher, backed by the American whip master, massacre their children, enslave their women, and usurp their land. Running out of options, the Arabs are again playing the normalisation card, which they had given up under US pressure and Israeli blackmail. Just because the Arabs agreed to halt normalisation and stop the rush to improve ties with Israel, the US hit the roof, launching a wide-scale slander campaign in which Egypt was the prime target. Egypt now stands, before an American judge and an Israeli prosecutor, accused of prompting the Arabs to stop their dealings with Israel and of abandoning its peace role."
(*Salaheddin Hafez*, 9 April)

Al-Ahram: "Netanyahu wants to convince the US and the world that Jews from Brooklyn, Kiev and Ethiopia have the right to travel thousands of miles to settle by force in Palestine and that this would not be tantamount to colonialism or imperialism. If Netanyahu *really believes this, why don't we have recourse to an* international court to decide who is right? But Netanyahu would not agree to that because he knows, like all colonialists, that he does not rely on reason but on brute force. It is Netanyahu's bad luck that the world is no longer what it was. Israel appeared as the last colonial power at a time when colonialism was on the wane. *Regardless of how brilliant Netanyahu is at public relations* and the art of propaganda, he will fail to convince the world."
(*Ibrahim Nafie*, 10 April)

Al-Akhbar: "It seems that Israel has become a super power without our knowledge! It is the only entity that has changed from being a gang to a state by a UN resolution. (There is no geographical or historical basis for the creation of that state.) In spite of all this it is the only state to defy UN resolutions (200 resolutions in all.) I say this on the occasion of the failure of the US administration to convince Israel to stop work, even temporarily, on the Jebel Ghneim settlement in Jerusalem. The United States also gave in to Israel's demand that Arafat should exert more efforts to stop "terrorism" prior to the resumption of the Oslo peace process! We notice that all acts of resistance that are legitimate under international law have become 'violence' then 'terrorism.'"
(*Ahmed Taha El-Naqr*, 10 April)

October: "*The New York Times* has published an article demanding that the US administration should determine what its policy in the Middle East is. We, too, would like to ask Clinton: Where does the United States stand? For peace or against it? For justice or against it? For protecting Muslim holy places or against that? Will we get a straight answer or sweet words, accompanied by poisoned deeds, as usual?"
(*Ragab El-Banna*, 13 April)

Al-Akhbar: "The Palestinian National Authority is coming under pressure to stop the uprising in the Occupied Territories. The uprising is not just depleting the energies of Israel's security apparatus. It is also causing a shift in world public opinion — particularly the American — against Israel. The uprising is causing positive damage to Israel's image on the American scene. I hope that it will continue until the Netanyahu government returns to its senses. In this context, we should remember the adverse effect of US public opinion on the Vietnam war. Let the Palestinian uprising go on until peace triumphs and stability and security come to the region."
(*Galal Dwidar*, 14 April)

Al-Arabi: "The concept of real peace will only dawn on the United States when we force it to admit its transgressions against the Arabs and realise that the real problem in the Middle East is not that of "terrorism" by the Arabs, who are defending their land. The problem is that a country, called Palestine, has been occupied and its people have been dispersed and subjected to the vilest of crimes. There will be no security or stability in the region unless the legitimate rights of that people are recognised and every inch of their occupied land is given back to them."
(*Galal Aref*, 14 April)

Compiled by ***Hala Saqr***



The "thinking head" reminded me of Leonardo da Vinci's self-portrait, painted when he was 80. This, however, is the head of the great Mustafa Amin, the pioneer journalist, whose *Thoughts* were eagerly read. The two faces are similar in form and content. I do not know if this is coincidental or intended.

Finally, I discovered another similarity with da Vinci, or more precisely with *his* masterpiece, the *Mona Lisa*, whose smile stays with us until today. Mustafa Amin, too, drew a smile on people's faces, then said a quiet good-bye.

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Deir Yassin Remembered
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On 9 April 1948, 254 people, half of them women and children, were butchered in the Palestinian village of Deir Yassin. On 8 April 1970, Israeli war planes destroyed the Egyptian primary school of Bahr El-Baqar. Nineteen children were killed, many more were severely injured. On 18 April 1996, Israeli gunners shelled a UN camp in south Lebanon. Of the 400 villagers who had sought shelter in the Qana camp, 100 men, women and children were killed. On 8 April 1997, two Israeli settlers opened fire on unarmed Palestinian protesters in Hebron, killing 24-year-old Asem Arafeh. On the same day, the Israeli army, joined by armed settlers, killed two others, and wounded 103, as Palestinian residents of Hebron protested Arafeh's murder. Last Wednesday, a conference in the West Bank University of Birzeit launched a year of remembrance of Deir Yassin. Tomorrow, Lebanon commemorates the first anniversary of the Qana massacre. Following the Deir Yassin massacre Menachem Begin issued a statement to Irgun forces. 'Accept my congratulations,' the statement read, for...

'this splendid act'

"Accept my congratulations for this splendid act of conquest..." **(Menachem Begin, a statement to Irgun forces after the massacre of Deir Yassin)**

"The first room was dark, everything was in disorder, but there was no one. In the second, amid disemboweled furniture and covers and all sorts of debris, I found some bodies cold. Here, the "cleaning up" had been done with machine-guns, then hand grenades. It had been finished off with knives, anyone could see that. The same thing in the next room, but as I was about to leave, I heard something like a sigh. I looked everywhere, turned over all the bodies, and eventually found a little foot, still warm. It was a little girl of ten, mutilated by a hand grenade, but still alive." **(Jacques de Reynier, head of the Red Cross in Palestine in 1948, recounting what he saw in Deir Yassin just after the massacre)**

"It was easy to make the Palestinians pay for 2,000 years of persecution. The Palestinians, who have felt the enormous power of this vengeance, were not the historical oppressors of the Jews. They did not put Jews into ghettoes and did not force them to wear yellow stars. They did not plan holocausts. But they had one fault. They were weak and defenseless in the face of real military might, so they were the ideal victims for an abstract revenge..." **(Beit-Hallahmi, *Original Sins*, Olive Branch Press, 1992)**

"The evil deeds committed by the Zionist Jews against the Palestinian Arabs that were comparable to crimes committed against the Jews by the Nazis, were the massacre of men, women and children at Deir Yassin on the 9th of April 1948, which precipitated a flight of the Arab population in large numbers from districts within range of the Jewish armed forces and the subsequent deliberate expulsion of the Arab population from districts conquered by the Jewish forces between the 15th of May, 1948 and the end of the year, i.e., from Akka in May, from Lidda and Ramleh in July and from Beersheba and Western Galilee in October. The Arab blood on the 9th of April, 1948 at Deir Yassin was on the head of the Irgun; the expulsions after the 15th of May, 1948 were on the heads of all Israel." **(Arnold Toynbee, *A Study of History*)**



photo: Khaled Al-Zaghary

"The Land of Israel was the birthplace of the Jewish people... Impelled by this historic association Jews strove throughout the centuries to go back to the land of their fathers and regain their statehood. In recent decades they returned in their masses. They reclaimed the wilderness, revived their language, built cities and villages, and established a vigorous and ever-growing community, with its own economic and cultural life. They sought peace yet were prepared to defend themselves. They brought the blessings of progress to all inhabitants of the country and looked forward to sovereign independence." **(The Proclamation of Israel's Independence, 14 May, 1948)**

Early in the morning of Friday 9 April 1948, commandos of the Irgun, headed by Menachem Begin, and the Stern Gang attacked Deir Yassin, a village of about 750 Palestinian residents. It was *several weeks before the end of the British Mandate*. The village lay outside of the area that the United Nations recommended be included in a future Jewish state. Deir Yassin had a peaceful reputation, had cooperated with the Jewish Agency, and was even said by a Jewish newspaper to have driven out some Arab militants. But it was located on high ground in the corridor between Tel Aviv and Jerusalem and one plan, kept secret until years afterwards, called for it to be destroyed and the residents evacuated to make way for a small airfield that would supply the beleaguered Jewish residents of Jerusalem.

By noon over 200 people, half of them women and children, had been systematically murdered. Four commandos died at the hands of resisting Palestinians using old Mausers and muskets. Twenty-five male villagers were loaded into trucks, paraded through the Zakhron Yosef quarter in Jerusalem, and then taken to a stone quarry along the road between Givat Shaul and Deir Yassin and shot. The remaining residents were driven to Arab East Jerusalem.

That evening the Irgunists and the Sternists escorted a party of foreign corespondents to a house *at Givat Shaul, a nearby Jewish settlement founded in* 1906. Over tea and cookies they amplified the details of the operation and justified it, saying Deir Yassin had become a concentration point for Arabs, including Syrians and Iraqis, planning to attack the western suburbs of Jerusalem. They said that 25 members of the Haganah militia had reinforced the attack and claimed that an Arabic-speaking Jew had warned the villagers over a loudspeaker from an armoured car. This was duly reported in *The New York Times* on 10 April.

The final body count of 254 was reported by *The New York Times* on 13 April, a day after they were finally buried. By then the leaders of the Haganah had distanced themselves from having participated in the attack and issued a statement denouncing the dissidents of Irgun and the Stern Gang, just as they had after the attack on the King David Hotel in July, 1946.

The Haganah leaders admitted that the massacre "disgraced the cause of Jewish fighters and dishonoured Jewish arms and the Jewish flag." They played down the fact that their militia had reinforced the terrorists' attack, even though they did not participate in the barbarism and looting during the subsequent "mopping up" operations.

They also played down the fact that, in Begin's words, "Deir Yassin was captured with the knowledge of the Haganah and with the approval of its commander" as a part of its "plan for establishing an airfield."

Ben Gurion even sent an apology to King Abdullah of Transjordan. But this horrific act served the future State of Israel well. According to Begin:

"Arabs throughout the country, induced to believe wild tales of 'Irgun butchery' were seized with limitless panic and started to flee for their lives. This mass flight soon developed into a maddened, uncontrollable stampede. The political and economic significance of this development can hardly be overestimated.

"Of about 144 houses, 10 were dynamited. The cemetery was later bulldozed and, like hundreds of other *Palestinian villages* to follow, Deir Yassin was wiped off the map. By September, Orthodox Jewish immigrants from Poland, Romania, and Slovakia were settled there over the objections of Martin Buber, Cecil Roth and other Jewish leaders, who believed that the site of the massacre should be left uninhabited. The centre of the village was renamed Givat Shaul Bet. As Jerusalem expanded, the land of Deir Yassin became part of the city and is now known simply as the area between Givat Shaul and the settlement of Har Nof on the western slopes of the mountain.

"The massacre of Palestinians at Deir Yassin is one of the most significant events in 20th century Palestinian and Israeli history. This is not because of its size or its brutality, but because it stands as the starkest early warning of a calculated depopulation of over 400 Arab villages and cities and the expulsion of over 700,000 Palestinian inhabitants to make room for survivors of the Holocaust and other Jews from the rest of the world."

(From *Deir Yassin Remembered*)

Deir Yassin Remembered: A year-long vigil

BIRZEIT University, in the West Bank city of Ramallah, is launching a series of remembrance activities, some of which designed to last onto the golden jubilee of the Deir Yassin atrocity, a year from now, reports **Omayma Abdel-Latif**.

"Deir Yassin Remembered," a conference held last Wednesday in that West Bank university, promised to keep alive the memory of Deir Yassin and to raise money to fund a "Deir Yassin Remembered" programme.

"This massacre is of special significance. This is not just because of its brutality, but because it stands out as the starkest early warning of a calculated depopulation of over 400 Arab villages and cities and the expulsion of over 700,000 Palestinians," said Daniel McGowan, head of the Deir Yassin Remembered Committee.

McGowan addressed the conference, emphasising that while "the suffering of the Jews has been rightly acknowledged and memorialised, that of Palestinians who died in 1948 and in the massacres that followed has been remembered by very few."

"Their history, in which the massacre at Deir Yassin is a very significant event, has been largely buried and forgotton," McGowan added.

In an attempt to shed light on the history of the Palestinians, Birzeit University is launching, through the Deir Yassin Remembered Committee, a year-long campaign with "humantrian objectives," says Khairyiah Abu Shusha, director of the campaign.

"We will design our own way of commemorating the atrocities which took place at Deir Yassin. Our committee will work to promote the human side of a people living in subhuman conditions," Abu Shusha told *Al-Ahram Weekly*.

The one-day conference focused on such themes as the "Raison D'etre of Deir Yassin," "Deir Yassin in Palestinian Poetry" as well as accounts of massacre survivors.

The Board of advisers of the Deir Yassin Remembered Committee, formed two years ago, includes Palestinians, Americans and Israelis.

Through seminars, conferences, documentaries of past massacres, accounts of survivors and press releases, the organisers of the conference hope to raise the international community's awareness of Palestinian suffering.

"Since nobody denies that the massacres did take place, then nobody *will object to memorialising them*," McGowan said.

The most difficult stage of the campaign, according to Abu Shusha, is to raise, from Palestinian and non-Palestinian donors, the $100,000 needed to organise a competition to design a Deir Yassin memorial and *to cover* the cost of submitting a petition to the Israeli Government to have a site in Deir Yassin designated for that purpose.

"The committee will sponsor an international competition to design a memorial to be erected at Deir Yassin," said Sahar Gosheh, the campaign *coordinator*. The competition will be open to artists from all over the world, including Israel, she said.

"There are no markers or memorials, not a word to alert visitors to the history of Deir Yassin, which is ironically situated in full view of Yad Vashem, Israel's Holocaust museum. We will send a committee to the Israeli government to demand a suitable site to build the memorial in Deir Yassin," Ghosheh added.

Al-Ahram Weekly

'Hope lives when people remember'

Mahmoud Kassem El-Yassini, at age 15, witnessed the massacre. He told **Omayma Abdel Latif** of his recollections

I was 15 years old studying at the Bakriya school in Jerusalem, which is two kilometres away from the village of Deir Yassin where we lived. I used to go to Jerusalem with my sister who was then a nurse at the Palestinian Women's Association. On the afternoon of 8 April, we were coming back from school, when we saw three Jewish militiamen climbing down an armoured tank and shooting at the Arabs in a coffee shop in Lefta.

I remember that we were standing at the bus stop waiting for bus 11 to take us to Deir Yassin when the shooting spree began. We ran to a hideout until the Jewish militiamen left. It was the first time in my whole life — short as it was then — that I had witnessed such a violent incident. Incident may not be a good word to describe the brutality of the killing, but it was perhaps a prelude to what I would live to witness and tell the following day when Deir Yassin was bathed in blood and grief.

At the time, we used to hear rumours about the killings the Jewish militiamen carried out in cold blood in nearby villages. I remember, though, that our village was a peaceful one and that the *mukhtar* (mayor) worked hard to protect our village from the brutality which was being inflicted on neighbouring villages.

On the night of 8 April, I remember that my mother was pregnant with my little brother Jihad and was in labour *throughout the night. We could not get to a hospital because the* village was under siege and there was no way out at night. At four o'clock in the morning on Friday, 9 April, we heard shots coming from all directions. Then people started screaming: "The Jews have taken us," and "The Jews are taking hold of Deir Yassin."

At the beginning, we could not believe it because the village was under the British mandate and there were still a few weeks left before the mandate would expire. My father took his gun and went out. He did not tell us where he was going but ordered us to hide in Dar El-Mabrouk, the *mukhtar's* house. By the time we left, we saw a couple of soldiers getting into our house and throwing a grenade inside. My mother could not get out.

We went to Dar El-Mabrouk and stayed there until midday. When my sister thought that the shooting was over because there were no voices to be heard, I headed home to get some food and water. On the way there, I saw little children as young as five being led by a Jewish soldier and being put before their trucks as human shields. The Jewish militiamen made them hold each other's hands and stand before the trucks. I remember hearing a Jewish terrorist who was touring the village and reporting the massacre, saying "Minus 15 Arabs. Minus 60 Arabs." After a while his message on the radio to his headquarters was "It is difficult to count."

Walking back home, I came across the evidence of widespread murder. Dozens of bodies of men littered the streets. But there were also women lying in houses with their skirts torn up to their waists and their legs wide apart; children with their throats cut open; rows of young men shot in the back after being lined up at an execution wall. There were even bodies of babies.

Down an alleyway, no more than 50 yards from our house, there lay a pile of corpses. There were more than a dozen young men whose arms and legs were wrapped around each other in the agony of death. All had been shot at point-blank range through the cheek, the bullet tearing away a line of flesh up to the ear and entering the brain. Some had vivid crimson or black scars down the left side of their throats. One of the women held a tiny baby to her body. The bullet had passed through her breast and killed the baby. Someone had slit open her stomach, cutting sideways and then upwards, perhaps trying to kill her unborn child. Her eyes were wide open, her dark face frozen in horror.

Everything seemed strange. There was blood everywhere. It was a massacre. The dead woman who held her baby reminded me of my mother, so I dashed to the house. I found her hiding in fear in the basement and when she saw me, she cried and started screaming. She told me to go to my uncle's house next door through a hole in the wall to make sure that the rest of the family was still alive. When I peered through the hole, I saw horror. I could see traces of blood all over the place. All that I could see was blood. I knew then that they had all been massacred. I stood by the wall and started crying and crying. Just a few hours ago my cousins, my playmates, had been slaughtered. I had lost my uncles Youssef and Mohamed Hamida.

When my mother and sister saw the scene, they fainted. I remember that the three of us went on crying for hours. We did not even know where my father was! My mother decided that we would wait until the night to head for another village, Ain Karim. We made the trip all the way from Deir Yassin to Ain Karim in the middle of the night. We could smell the blood and we saw 20 or 30 houses razed to the ground. All those who fled Deir Yassin were going to Ain Karim. On the way there, I met young men and women who asked me about their fathers, mothers and relatives. "They are dead," I kept saying hysterically. "All dead. Deir Yassin is dead. No one survived." All I could see was grief and bitterness. My agony would increase at seeing people collapse like cracked houses when they heard the news of the death of their relatives.

The next morning, we heard that more survivors from the massacre were able to flee the brutality. I kept praying all night that my father was still alive. When he saw us, he could not believe that we were alive. He was seriously injured, the Jews had shot him three times. We headed for Jerusalem where my grandfather's house was located, in Bab Hattah. My mother was seriously ill because of labour complications and my father went to the Red Cross to get medical help for her.

The survivors of the Deir Yassin massacre were given shelter in the Al-Aqsa Mosque. I saw many Jewish assailants targeting the Dome of the Rock with mortar bombs. After a while, we had to go to the village of Abu Redis, because in Jerusalem we were constantly under attack. My mother was overdue and on her way to the hospital with her brother, Jewish terrorists threw a bomb at her. She died but the baby survived. We decided to name him Jihad as she had wanted to call him.

Most of the Palestinian villagers in Jerusalem fled their houses for fear of further terrorist attacks. We found out later that whole families were killed. I heard that the Zahran clan lost 40 men, women and children. They were the first family in Deir Yassin to be slaughtered by the Jewish terrorists. The *whole village had 40 British-made guns but there was no* mortar of any kind. I remember that all the villages lying from Deir Yassin to Jerusalem were numb with grief. Shock, horror, anguish were all that was there. The villagers were staggered by the carnage and the very few who lived to tell the tales of *horror were not able to speak out in the weeks that followed.*

In the panic and hatred of war, tens of thousands were killed on this land. But these people, hundreds of them, had been shot down unarmed. This was a mass killing, an incident — how easily we use the word "incident" in Palestine — that was also an atrocity. *It went beyond even what the Israelis would call, in* other circumstances, a terrorist activity. It was a war crime.

The scenario of the Deir Yassin massacre plays itself out every day. Looking into the eyes of a mother who lost her son to the brutality of Israeli soldiers conveys a small sense of what it means to live in Israel today. But it is somehow different now because the whole world now realises that the Palestinians, as a people, do exist. Yet they still have to acknowledge that during the creation of the state of Israel, thousands of Palestinians were killed and over 700,000 were driven, frightened, from the houses and land on which they had lived for centuries. Two of my sons were killed in the Intifada (which began in 1987) but I do not regret it — they died as martyrs.

People think that we buried our memories of the massacre *when we buried our loved ones. But these memories are not* buried and forgotten. The whole world should know what we suffered, what we lost and why our people died. Hope lives when people remember.



Nineteen children were killed and 89 maimed and injured when Israeli warplanes bombed and destroyed an Egyptian primary school on 8 April 1970

Target: children

"To you, lady of the White House, the children of Bahr Al-Baqar are appealing in the name of our victims so that you would know what the US-made Phantoms did to our friends. Do you know that the men of Israel killed innocent children in Bahr Al-Baqar? Would you accept that US-made planes kill children?"

This is an extract from a letter sent by the children who survived the bombing of their school to Pat Nixon a week after the incident.

In fact, what happened in Bahr Al-Baqar primary school at 9 o'clock on the morning of 8 April 1970 defies description. On that day, the single-storey school located in Salhiya village, some 110km from the Delta city of Zaqaziq, was bombed by Israeli warplanes. Five bombs and two rockets were dropped on the school at a time when 89 children were attending their classes. The school was destroyed completely, leaving 19 children dead and the rest severely wounded.

According to eye witnesses of the massacre, the dead children lay in the school courtyard like discarded dolls, their uniforms tattered and stained with blood, mud and dust. Some could not have been more than seven years of age. The following day, the death toll rose to 30 pupils and one teacher, while the injured suffered from first-degree burns. The attack was one of a series targeting civilians during the war of attrition between Egypt and Israel that lasted from 1968 to mid-1970. The attack came shortly after the Israeli airforce raided a factory in the Abu-Zaabal area, a working-class district north of Cairo. That attack caused the death of 89 workers.

Today, what remains of the school-massacre is a memorial on which are inscribed the names of the 30 children who died. A few metres away from the scene of the massacre lies a museum housing the torn uniforms of the dead pupils and their blood-stained notebooks.

The irony of the incident was that some of the victims' families had fled Israeli brutality in then Israeli-occupied Sinai by migrating to the Delta area. They settled in Bahr Al-Baqar only to lose their children in the bombed school, a few months after fleeing Israeli violence.

Making a land without a people

Just one day before the massacre of Deir Yassin, Abdel-Qader Al-Husseini was martyred as he led Palestinians into victory in the battle of Al-Qasttal. His son, Faisal Al-Husseini, the PLO's chief negotiator responsible for Jerusalem, tells **Sherine Bahaa** of a turning point in Palestinian history



What, in your opinion, were the motives for the massacre of Deir Yassin?

At that time, there was a large number of Palestinians in the territories. Even those parts which were supposed to be Jewish were inhabited by a large number of Palestinians. In the meantime, plans were being made to empty the villages of their inhabitants. This can explain the brutality with which this massacre and others were carried out.

One of the main targets of the massacre was to create panic and encourage mass emigration. Through this kind of massacre, the Jews wanted mainly to change the demographic structure of Palestine.

Deir Yassin was not the first massacre; there are reports of two earlier massacres in the same year. Why did this particular atrocity turn into a symbol?

There were a lot of other massacres before and after Deir Yassin. Yet, this particular massacre gained more prominence due to the village's location. Deir Yassin was situated on the western borders of Jerusalem whereas now it falls within *its boundaries.*

Moreover, Deir Yassin was exploited politically by both the Israeli and the Arab sides. However, I think that although the massacre of Deir Yassin was full of brutality on the Israeli side, *the Palestinian reaction should have fo*cused more on waging a counter-attack than on bemoaning the massacre.

Actually, a counter-attack took place a few days after Deir Yassin, in the Sheikh Jarrah battle, which the Palestinians won. I believe that this is an achievement which should have been highlighted in the Arab media as much as Deir Yassin itself.

How does this kind of mass murder of civilians fit in with Zionist ideology?

The Zionists wanted to reinforce their belief that *Palestine is a land without a people and should* be given to a people without a land. Yet, when they arrived in Palestine they discovered that it had a people. So, they had to get rid of them.

Atrocities committed against the Palestinians in Deir Yassin and other massacres seem to be little known, and to have small impact on international, and particularly Western, public opinion. Why is this, in your view?

I admit that we have failed to document this massacre properly, *but it is emblazoned in our memories.* The massacre shook the Palestinians, but we did not expose it strongly enough before the Western or international media. This is true not just of Deir Yassin, but of other massacres as well.

If this is the case, should we not begin to give considerably more attention to this fundamental feature of the Zionist project in Palestine, and to prioritise it in addressing not just international public opinion, but the Israeli peace camp as well?

We should even go further by documenting those events on an individual level and by tracing the history of the survivors. How many times were they evacuated from the territories? Have they faced further massacres? Were they allowed to return or not?

What happened to those Palestinians who fled their villages at the time of the massacres?

They left with the intention of coming back as soon as the attacks were halted. But when they wanted to go back they were prevented by the Israelis. Survivors of Deir Yassin were loaded onto trucks and dumped on the borders outside Jerusalem.

It was an avalanche. The stories and the horrible suffering of the survivors, each of whom had lost sons, daughters, a husband, a wife, etc., would trigger panic among the inhabitants of other villages. It was a well planned and executed operation to terrorise the Palestinian population, and to ethnically cleanse the Palestinian territories of their people.

Though they have tried to marginalise Deir Yassin and other massacres before world public opinion, at the time, and on the ground in Palestine, the Zionists deliberately underlined the fact that these were planned terror operations, and not the random acts of violence against civilians, which they have since claimed they were.

Horror unearthed

In 1995, the Centre for Studying and Documenting the Palestinian Community (CSDPC) compiled the full account of a previously-untold massacre. **Amira Howeidi** reviews eyewitness accounts of the massacre at Abu Shousha

The inhabitants of Abu Shousha got up on the morning of 14 May 1948, filled with a sense of dread. For days, they had been monitoring the advance of Jewish forces toward their area. With their inadequate defences, the future looked bleak. *But the inhabitants of the village,* situated 8km southwest of Al-Ramla, decided to stay on.

To protect their women and children, the villagers sent them to hiding places in nearby caves. The men, staying behind to defend their village, had between them 70 rifles, 20 of them defective, and an old "Bren" canon.

Early on that day, the Jewish shelling started. Hours later, the village fell. Once the Jewish soldiers were inside Abu Shousha, they started shooting at everything that moved, even livestock.

Some villagers took refuge in a house, but the soldiers followed them in. Ahmed Saleh Al-Belbesi was 10 years old at the time and recalls what happened: "The soldiers said to them, 'your lives are not worth the bullets,' and then cracked their heads with axes. Four, at least, were killed in this manner."

By the time the soldiers left the house, Al-Belbesi recalls: "Blood was everywhere. Hassan Abul-Su'oud's head was split open, and part of his head was up there, stuck on the wall. This scene still haunts me like a nightmare."

In later "mopping-up" operations, the Jewish soldiers found some young men, lined them against a wall, and shot them.

The killing went on. Among its victims were a paralysed man, Sheikh Mohamed Abul-Su'oud, and a child, Khalil Mohamed Salama.

*In the days that followed, the women and chil*dren hiding in the caves began to run out of food.

On the third day, a woman called Fatema was caught by the soldiers as she went out to look for food. Under duress, she led them to the caves where the rest of the villagers were hiding. The soldiers ordered everyone out and took them back to the village. Once there, the women found the decomposed bodies of their men lying about. They obtained permission to bury them in mass graves close to the village.

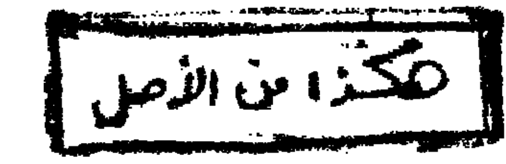
Weakened and in shock, the women did not have the strength to carry out a decent burial. Sometimes, they just covered the bodies with a thin layer of earth or simply dragged them into the caves.

The women were weeping all the time, recalls Al-Belbesi. "The worst scene I remember was when they discovered the carnage at Awadallah's house. The bodies of young men were still there, their heads split open."

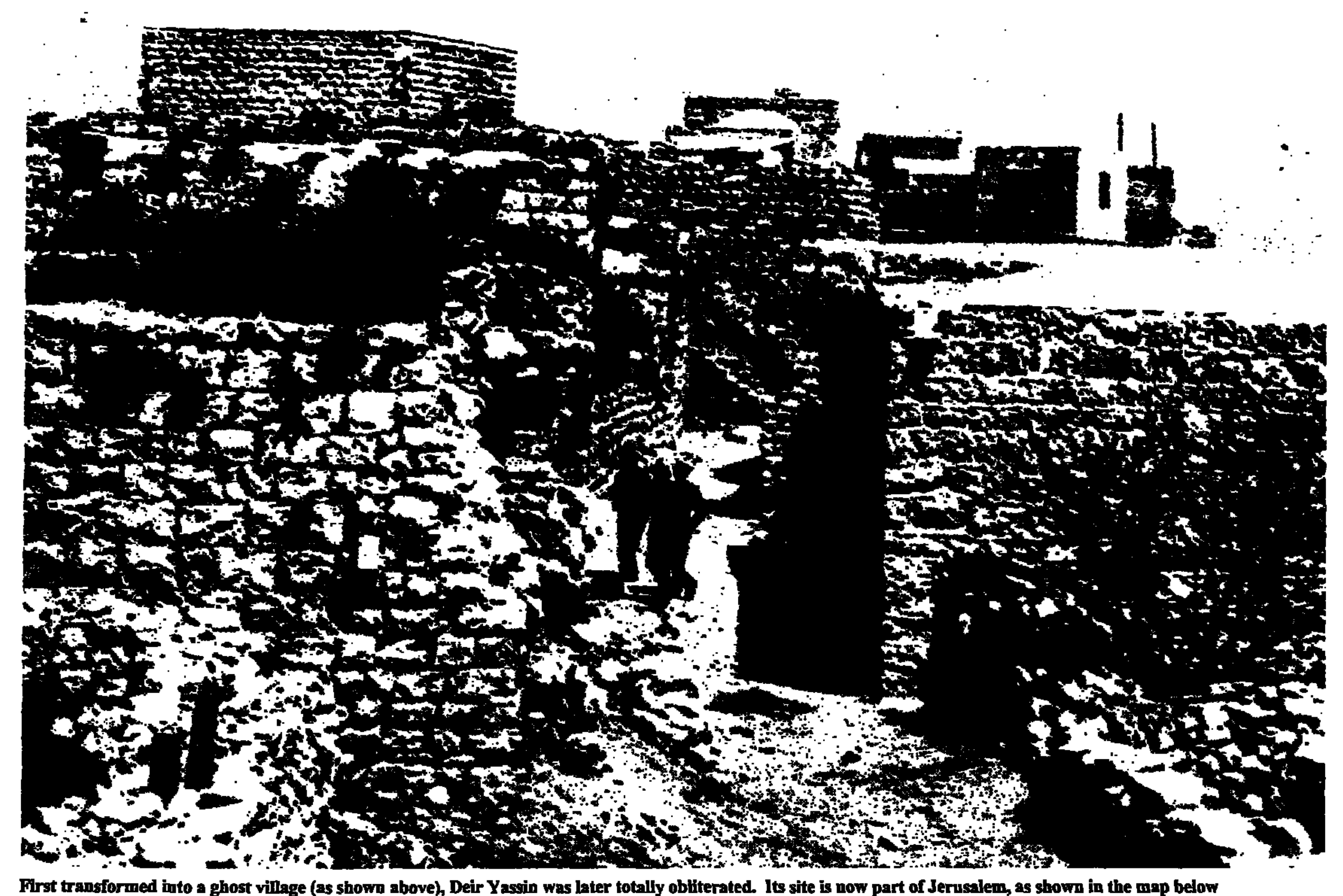
The Zionists resolve to drive out the villagers of Abu Shousha was incontrovertible, however, and the killing continued. Thirteen-year-old Khalil Mohamed Salama was hiding with his mother in a cave before they were permitted to return to the village. A few hours later, a Jewish patrol passed by and stopped them. One of the soldiers asked the mother about her destination. Then he grabbed the boy, ordered him to walk in front of him, then hit him on the head with an axe, splitting his skull. The soldier then said to the mother: "Go and tell everyone of what you just saw."

Later on, the surviving villagers were ordered *to form two lines* and start walking. The soldiers then began firing at their legs. According to an eyewitness, several villagers received bullet wounds and a number of pregnant women had miscarriages. The survivors then took shelter in another village, Al-Qebab. Abu Shousha was later transformed into a Jewish agricultural settlement.

Total count: 50 killed, 11 wounded.



هكذا من الأصل



First transformed into a ghost village (as shown above), Deir Yassin was later totally obliterated. Its site is now part of Jerusalem, as shown in the map below

'I found the bodies cold'

Jacques de Reynier, the head of the delegation in Palestine of the International Red Cross during 1948, entered Deir Yassin a day after the massacre. Below are his recollections of the horror

On Saturday 10 April a very serious incident took place: I received a telephone call from the Arabs asking me to go immediately to the village of Deir Yassin, where the civilian population of the whole village had just been massacred. I learned that this sector, situated very near to Jerusalem, was held by Irgun extremists. The Jewish Agency and the headquarters of the Haganah told me that they knew nothing of the affair and that in any case it was impossible for anyone to penetrate into Irgun territory. They advised me not to get mixed up in the affair, as, if I did, my mission would almost certainly be terminated.

Not only did they refuse to help me, they also refused to be responsible for what they were sure would happen to me. I replied that I intended to go, and that it was a matter of public knowledge that the Jewish Agency exercised its authority over all the territory in Jewish hands and *was therefore responsible for my person* as well as for my liberty of action, within the limits of my mission.

However, I did not know what to do. Without Jewish help, it was impossible for me to reach the village. Then, by thinking hard, I remembered that a Jewish nurse in a nearby hospital had given me her telephone number, telling me, with an odd expression, *that I could call her if* ever I found myself in an inextricable situation. Taking a chance, I rang her up late at night and explained the situation. She told me to go to a certain place with my car at 7 o'clock next morning, and there pick up the person I found waiting. Then she rang off.

The next morning, at the appointed place and time, a man in civilian clothes, but with pockets bulging with revolvers, jumped into my car and told me to drive on without stopping. At my request, he agreed to show me the road to Deir Yassin, but admitted that he could not do much for me. We went out of Jerusalem, leaving the main road behind the rear of the regular army, and took a road that cut across it. Very soon, we were stopped by two soldier-like individuals, whose looks were far from reassuring, with machine-guns in their hands, and large cutlasses in *their belts.* From their appearance I gathered they must be the men I was looking for. I got out of the car and submitted myself to a thorough search, then realised that I was a prisoner. Everything seemed lost, when, suddenly, a huge fellow, at least two metres tall, and as large as a cupboard, appeared, pushed his comrades aside, and seized my hand and squeezed it *in his enormous paws,* shouting incomprehensibly. He did not understand either English or French, but in German we seemed to be able to communicate perfectly. He expressed his joy at seeing a member of the Red Cross because, as he explained, its intervention had saved his life no less than three times when he was a prisoner in a German concentration camp. He said that I was more than a brother to him, and that he would do everything I asked him. With such a bodyguard I felt I could go to the end of the world, and so to start with, we went to Deir Yassin.

After reaching a hill, 500 yards away from the village which we could just see, we had to wait a long time for the order to proceed. Arab firing broke out whenever anybody tried to cross the road, and the commander of the Irgun detachment did not seem willing to receive me. At last he arrived, young, distinguished, and perfectly correct, but there was a peculiar glitter in his eyes, cold and cruel. I explained my mission to him, pointing out that it was not part of my task either to pass judgement or arbitrate — I *only* wanted to save the wounded and take back the dead. The Jews, in any case, had signed the Geneva Convention, so that my mission was an official one. This last statement angered the officer who asked me to understand once and for all that here the Irgun were in command and no one else, not even the Jewish Agency, with whom they had nothing in common. Here my "wardrobe" intervened, seeing the tension growing higher, and he seemed to find the right arguments, for *suddenly the officer said that I could do* as I wished but on my own responsibility. He told me the story of this village, inhabited exclusively by Arabs, to the number of approximately 400, never armed, and living on good terms with the surrounding Jews. According to him the Irgun had arrived 24 hours earlier and ordered the inhabitants by loudspeaker to evacuate all houses and *surrender:* the time given to obey the order was a quarter of an hour. Some of these miserable people had come forward *and were taken* prisoners, to be released later in the direction of the Arab lines. The rest, not having obeyed the order, had met the fate they deserved. But there was no point in exaggerating things, there were only a few dead, and they would be buried as soon as the "cleaning up" of the village was over. If I found any bodies, I could take them, but there were certainly no wounded. This account made my blood run cold.

JERUSALEM

Deir Yassin

The Knesset

Hebrew University

THE OLD CITY

I went back then to the Jerusalem road and got an ambulance and a truck that I had alerted through the Red Shield. The two Jewish drivers and the Jewish doctor who boarded *them were more dead than* alive, but followed me courageously. Before reaching the Irgun outpost I stopped and inspected the two vehicles. A good thing I did, too, as I discovered two Jewish journalists preparing to get the scoop of their lives. Unfortunately for them, I very firmly got rid of them. I reached the village with my convoy, and the Arab firing stopped. *The gang was wearing country* uniform, with helmets. All of them were young, some even adolescents, men and women, armed to the teeth: revolvers, machine-guns, hand grenades, and also large cutlasses in their hands, most of them still blood-stained. A beautiful young girl, with criminal eyes, showed me hers still dripping with blood; she displayed *it like a trophy. This was the* "cleaning up" team, that was obviously performing its task very conscientiously.

I tried to go into a house. A dozen soldiers surrounded me, their machine-guns aimed at my body, and their officer forbade me to move. The dead, if any, would be brought to me, he said. I then flew into one of the most towering rages of my life, *telling these criminals what* I thought of their conduct, threatening them with everything I could think of, and then pushed them aside and went into the house.

The first room was *dark*, everything was in disorder, but there was no one. In the second, amid disemboweled furniture and covers and all sorts of debris, I found *some bodies cold. Here, the "cleaning up"* had been done with machine-guns, then hand grenades. It had been finished off with knives, anyone could see that. The same thing in the next room, but as I was about to leave, I heard something like a sigh. I looked everywhere, turned over all the bodies, and eventually found a little foot, still warm. It was a little girl of ten, mutilated by a hand grenade, but still alive. As I was about to carry her out, the officer tried to stop me, blocking the doorway. I pushed him aside and went through with my precious load protected by my good friend the glass cupboard. The ambulance set off, with orders to come back as soon as possible. As the *gang had not dared to attack me directly,* I could continue. I gave orders for the bodies in this house to be loaded on the truck, and went into the next house, and so on. Everywhere, it was the same horrible sight. I found only two more people alive, both women, one of them an old grandmother, hidden behind a heap of firewood where she had kept quiet for at least 24 hours.

There had been 400 people in this village; about fifty of them had escaped, and were still alive. All the rest had been deliberately massacred in cold blood for, as I observed for myself, this gang was admirably disciplined and only acted under orders.

Back in Jerusalem I went straight to the *Jewish Agency where I found the leaders* dismayed, apologetic and pretending, which indeed was true, that they had no power over the Irgun or the Stern Gang. However, they had done nothing to try and prevent about a hundred men from committing this unspeakable crime.

Then I went to visit the Arabs. I said nothing about what I had seen, but only *that after a preliminary hurried visit to the* place, it seemed to me that there were several dead people, and that I wondered what to do with them and where to put them. The indignation of the Arabs was understandable, but it prevented them from taking a decision. They would have liked the corpses brought back to the Arab side, but feared a revolt of the pop*ulation and did not know where to put* them or bury them. Finally, they decided to ask me to see to it that they were decently buried in a place that could be recognised later. I agreed to undertake this task and went back to Deir Yassin. I found the Irgun people in a very bad temper; they tried to prevent me from approaching the village. I understood their *attitude when I saw the number,* and especially the state of the corpses that had been lined up all along the main road. I asked very firmly that the burial be started and insisted on being present. After discussion, digging was started on a big grave in a small garden. It was impossible to check the identity of the dead as they had no papers, but I took careful note of all their particulars, with approximate ages. As night fell, I went back to Jerusalem, stating clearly that I was coming back the next day.

Two days later, the Irgun had disappeared from the place, and the *Haganah* had taken over; we discovered several places where the corpses had been stacked, without decency or respect, in *the open air.*

After this last visit, I went back to my office where I was visited by two gentlemen, well-dressed in civilian clothes, who had been waiting for me for more than an hour. They were the commander of the Irgun detachment and his aide. They had prepared a paper that they wanted me to sign. It was a statement to the effect that I had been very courteously received by them, and obtained all the facilities I had requested, in the accomplishment of my mission, and thanking them for the help I had received.

As I showed signs of hesitation and even started to argue with them, they said that if I valued my life, I had better sign *immediately. The only course open to me* was to convince them that I did not value my life in the least and that a declaration quite contrary to theirs had already gone to Geneva. I added that in any case I was not in the habit of signing statements written by others, but only those exclusively drawn up by me. Before I let them go, I tried to explain to them once more the purpose of our mission and asked them whether or not they intended to oppose us in the future. I did not get an answer that day, but later, in Tel Aviv, I saw them again; they needed our help for some of their own people, and in gratitude for our cooperation, they were of great assistance to us on several occasions, returning some hostages we claimed without argument.

The affair of Deir Yassin had immense repercussions. The press and radio spread the news everywhere among Arabs as well as the Jews. In this way a general terror was built up among the Arabs, a terror astutely fostered by the Jews. On both sides, it was made into a political argument, and the results were tragic. Driven by fear, the Arabs left their homes to find shelter among their kindred; first isolated farms, then villages, and in the end whole towns were evacuated, even when *the Jewish invader had done no more* than make it appear that he intended to attack. Finally, about 700,000 Arabs became refugees, leaving everything behind in their haste, their one hope being to avoid the fate of the people of Deir Yassin. The effects of this massacre are far from being over today, as this immense crowd of refugees is still living in make*shift camps, without work and without* hope, the Red Cross distributing to them emergency aid provided by the United Nations.

The Jewish authorities were terribly shocked by the affair, which took place four days after they had signed the Geneva Convention. They begged me to use my good offices with the Arabs to per*suade them that it* was an isolated incident. I replied that I would try, but did not hide my displeasure nor my fears for the future. The Arabs were absolutely furious and totally discouraged. For their part, they had no further hopes of anything good coming from the Jewish side, and could not help wondering whether it would not be better to abandon such hu*manitarian ideas as they had concerning* the Jews. It was not easy to appease them, or to persuade them that the mistakes of one people can in no way excuse those of another. On the contrary, we said, the fact that the Arabs had kept their promise would prove to the world their honesty and faithfulness to their word of honour. We assured them that our long experience made it impossible that we should doubt them, and that we knew that they would act with dignity and humanity, whatever happened. After this memorable meeting, we had the impression that all was not lost, although it had been a very near thing.

(From: Jacques de Reynier, *A Jerusalem un drapeau flottait sur la ligne de feu,* Neuchatel: Editions de la Baconniere, 1950. In: Walid Khalidi (ed), *From Haven to Conquest: Readings in Zionism and the Palestine Problem until 1948,*. The Institute for Palestine Studies, Beirut, 1971.)



Sinai, October '56 & June '67: Michael Bar-Zohar, an Israeli army veteran, boasted on Israeli radio in early 1995 of having taken part in executing 49 Egyptian POWs captured during the Suez War in '56. Bar-Zohar spoke of another incident in which he witnessed three Egyptian POWs butchered by an Israeli officer. It was later revealed that similar massacres of Egyptian POWs took place during the '67 June War.

Trail of bloodshed:

An inexhaustive list

Yehida

13 December 1947: Men sitting at the coffee house of this Arab village saw what they thought was an approaching British Army patrol. Four patrol cars pulled up in *front of the coffee house and men dressed in khaki uniforms and steel helmets* stepped out. They were not British soldiers. The disguised Jewish attackers sprayed the coffee shop with machine-gun fire and lobbed grenades at Arab homes. Fortunately, a real British patrol arrived at the scene soon afterward and stopped the killing. Otherwise, the death toll of seven Arabs could have been higher.

Khisas

18 December 1947: Two carloads of Haganah terrorists drove through the village *of Khisas (on the Lebanese-Syrian border) firing machine-guns and throwing gre*nades. Ten Arab civilians were killed.

Qazaza

19 December 1947: Five Arab children were murdered when Jewish terrorists blew up the house of the village mayor, or *mukhtar*.

Al-Sheikh Village

1 January 1948, night time: Two hundred Zionists armed with hand grenades and machine-guns sneaked into the tiny village (situated 5km southeast of Haifa). The attackers came across the southern hills, attacking the houses on the edge of the village, killing some 40 Palestinians.

Deir Yassin

9-10 April 1948: Hoping to avert a Zionist attack on his village, the *mukhtar*, or *village mayor, struck a deal with the Zionists. He would provide them with in*formation on the movement of strangers in the area and his village, in return, would be spared. The Zionists, however, did not keep their side of the deal. Operation Unity, as the Jewish attackers called it, lasted two days. Death toll: 250.

Naser Al-Din

13-14 April 1948: A contingent of Lehi and Irgun entered this village (near Tiberias), dressed as Arab fighters. When the villagers came out to greet them, the Zionists opened fire. Only 40 villagers survived. All houses in the village were razed to the ground.

Beit Daras

21 May 1948: After a number of unsuccessful attempts to occupy this village, the Zionists mobilised a large contingent and surrounded it. The inhabitants tried to send their women and children away to escape the fighting, but they were spotted and massacred by the Zionist force.

The Dahmash Mosque

11 July 1948: After the Israeli 89th Commando Battalion, led by Moshe Dayan, occupied Lydda, the Israelis told the inhabitants that they would be safe if they took sanctuary in the mosque. Several Israeli soldiers were later killed in a grenade attack. The Israelis retaliated by killing between 80 and 100 Palestinians in the mosque.

Dawayma

29 October 1948: Another atrocity by the 89th Battalion, perpetrator of the above Lydda massacre. According to one soldier who participated in the occupation of that village (situated in the Haifa sub-district), up to 100 Arabs were massacred. Eyewitness accounts speak of rape, killing of children, and blowing-up of homes with the inhabitants inside.

Sharafat Massacre

7 February 1951: Israeli soldiers crossed the armistice line to this village (5km from Jerusalem) and blew up the houses of the *mukhtar* and his neighbours: Ten killed, eight wounded.

Kafr Qassem

29 October 1956: Israeli frontier guards went out on a patrol to tell the *mukhtars*, or mayors, of several villages that the curfew *already* in place *will* be extended so as to begin at 5pm instead of 6pm. They reached Kafr Qassem around 16.45 and told the *mukhtar*. He protested that there are about 400 villagers working outside the village and that there was no time to inform them of the change. An officer assured him that they will be taken care of. Forty-three Kafr Qassem inhabitants were massacred as they headed back home from work.

Al-Sammou'

13 November 1966: *Israeli forces raided this village,* destroyed *125 houses* as well as the village clinic and school: Eighteen killed, 54 wounded.

Abu Zaabal

12 April 1970: An Israeli phantom plane raided a steel factory at Abu Zaabal, 13 miles from Cairo. Some 140 workers were killed or injured.

Bahr El-Baqar

8 April 1970: At 9.00am, two Israeli phantom planes raided the Bahr El-Baqar primary school in El-Sharqiya Governorate in Egypt killing 46 schoolchildren and a teacher.

Sabra And Shatila

15-18 September 1982: After the 1982 Israeli invasion of Lebanon, the Israeli-backed Phalangist militia, a right-wing Lebanese outfit, attacked Palestinian civilians in the Sabra and Shatila camps. According to one estimate: 2,750 were killed.

Oyon Qara (Rishon Lezion)

20 May 1990: An Israeli lined up Palestinian workers and murdered seven of them with a machine-gun. Thirteen Palestinians were killed by Israeli forces in subsequent protests.

Al-Aqsa Mosque

8 October 1990: Israeli police opened fire on worshippers in Al-Aqsa Mosque, killing 22.

Al-Ibrahimi Mosque

25 February 1994: A Jewish settler from Keryat Arba' massacred 60 worshippers in Al-Ibrahimi Mosque in Hebron. Later, 23 Palestinians were killed in related *protests.*

The Jabalia Massacre

28 March 1994: Jewish undercover police opened fire on Palestinian activists, killing six and injuring 49. *Some of the activists were pulled out of their cars and* shot in the head.

Qana

18 April 1996: Southern Lebanese civilians leave their villages in compliance with warnings issued by the Israeli forces, as they launch their 'Grapes of Wrath' onslaught on southern Lebanon. Some 400 seek refuge at a UN camp in Qana. Israeli gunners shell the camp, killing over 100 women, men and children.

(Source: *Palestine Times* — March 1993 and Al-Ahram archives)

Al-Ahram Weekly

The white Jew's burden

Deir Yassin was not an isolated incident, writes Abdel-Wahab Elmessiry, but the expression of an imperialist world view and the conviction of racial superiority. The same factors were at work in the extermination of indigenous Americans and the transfer of the Palestinian population. Before and after Deir Yassin, Zionists continued to search for territorial victory — and a demographic final solution



Settler-colonial enclaves have developed elaborate arguments to rationalise their aberrant presence in Asia and Africa. Sometimes Zionist apologetics are simply the familiar type that expounds on the purity and superiority of the white man. At other times, circumstances call for less familiar terms and an idiom more suited to specific ends.

European settler colonialism was predicated on certain racist assumptions concerning the genetic and cultural superiority of Western civilisation and the white man. In the eyes of the colonists, these assumptions sanctioned the introduction of an alien Western demographic element into the continents of Africa and Asia. Lord Balfour described the process of settler colonialism as an expression of the "great rights and privileges" of the races of Europe, and considered the inequality of the races "to be the plain historic truth of the situation."

European settler colonialism, according to Crossman, was launched in terms of the white man's right to bring civilisation to the "less civilised 'natives'" of Asia and Africa by physically occupying the two continents, even at the cost of "wiping out the aboriginal population" (civilising a people by exterminating them does seem a curious method). Even before his espousal of Zionism, in keeping with his racist colonialist outlook, Marx Nordau suggested the settlement of unemployed European workers, with the European immigrants taking "the place of the 'lower races' who were not surviving in the struggle of evolution."

To prove his innocence during his trial at Nuremberg, Nazi theoretician Alfred Rosenberg advanced a similar argument, underscoring for his judges the organic relationship between racism and colonialism. He pointed out that he had stumbled on the term "superman" (*Herrenmensch*) in a book on the life of Lord Kitchener, a man who "had conquered the world." He also claimed that he had come across the term "master race" (*Herrenrasse*) in the writings of "the American ethnologist Madison Grant and of the French ethnologist Lapouge." He noted further that this kind of ethnology was but a "biological discovery which was the conclusion of 400 years of European research".

With the growing need for markets and territories, and the intensification of Europe's economic and demographic crises, racist theories gained in intensity and depth. The author of the entry on "Race relations" in the *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences* indicates that "the era of race relations can be said to have begun with the overseas expansion of the major European powers from the fifteenth century onward." Gentile Zionism and Christian restorationist views began to flourish at the same time. Nor is it a coincidence that contemporaneous pseudo-messianic movements in Judaism also became more frequent from that time on. The false messiah, Shabettai Tzvi, came from a mercantile background, and his father worked for a British overseas trading company.

But all these myths and ideologies were trial runs for the full-fledged global imperialism and racism of the late nineteenth century. The author of the entry on "Racism" in *The New Encyclopedia Britannica* found it "no accident that racism flourished at the time of the second great wave of European colonial expansion and the scramble for Africa." He added that the ideology of colonialism and the theory of the white man's burden were "often expressed in racist terms."

The fraudulent messiah of the age of imperialism and the scramble for Africa was Zionism. It was in the late nineteenth-century imperialist-racist frame of reference that the Zionist theoreticians conceived of their project and implemented it, in order to benefit from the colonialist formula and to share the privilege and right of shouldering that most onerous burden, civilising the non-white races and engaging in the noble *mission civilisatrice* of Europe.

In his study *The Jews of Today*, first published in German in 1904, Arthur Ruppin sided with a certain von Luschau, one of the many Zionist theoreticians of the "Jewish race," whom he credited with the discovery of "the physical resemblance between the Jews and the races of Asia Minor, especially the Armenians." Ruppin preferred to see the Jews as members of the "white race," and he lauded any theoretical efforts that struck a "blow at the Semitic theory." The racial difference between Jews and Europeans, according to him, "was not great enough to warrant an unfavourable prognostic as to the fruits of a mixed marriage."

There is a whole strain in Zionist thought which confines the term "Jew" to the white Jews of Europe, the Ashkenazim. This premise is given its most open expression in Ruppin's *The Jews of Today*, where he discusses the effect of the Zionist movement on the consciousness of many a "Western Jew." Zionist settlement efforts were largely aimed at recruiting European Jews only, and rarely tried to recruit Oriental Jews, Ruppin explained, despite the fact that it would have been "a far easier task to settle Oriental Jews (Jews from Yemen, Morocco, Aleppo [Syria], and the Caucasus) in agricultural colonies."

Throughout all the discussions involving Zionist proposals for penetration into Africa and Asia, it was assumed that the white people of the Occident possessed certain rights because of their high level of civilisation. Herzl, in the manner of nineteenth-century imperialist thinkers, spoke of imperialism as a noble activity, destined to bring civilisation to the benighted members of other races. Viewing the Jewish state through these Occidental binoculars, in 1896 he wrote a letter to the Grand Duke of Baden assuring him that when the Jews returned to their "historical fatherland," they would do so as "representatives of Western civilisation," who would bring "cleanliness, order, and the well-established customs of the Occident to this plague-ridden, blighted corner of the Orient." The Zionists, as fervent advocates of European progress, would "build railroads into Asia — the highway of the civilised peoples." Herzl, operating within the context of the myth of the white Jew, asserted that the Jewish state was designed to "form a part of a wall of defence for Europe in Asia, an outpost of civilisation against barbarism."

The perception of the Jews not merely as a separate racial entity, but as members of the white race and Western civilisation, underlies many statements of the Zionists and their image of themselves. In *Rebirth and Destiny of Israel*, Ben Gurion drew a number of analogies between the Zionists and other colonists, which revealed his strong "white" orientation. In 1917, in an article entitled "In Judea and Galilee," he saw the Zionist settlers in the land of Israel "as not just working" but, rather, as "conquering a land. We were a company of conquistadores." In another piece entitled "Earning a homeland," dated 1915, Ben Gurion compared the Zionist settlement to the American settlement in the New World, conjuring up the image of the "fierce fights" the American colonists fought against "wild nature and wilder redskins." It is significant that he reduced the "redskins" to the level of nature, or even lower, for they are "wilder."

This process of abstracting man, reducing him to mere natural cycles, which is an extension of the Darwinian outlook to the realm of ethics, renders extermination a more acceptable act and the depopulation of an area a prerequisite for survival. The Nazis later made full use of that logic on a more massive and "scientific" scale. They declared it their duty "to depopulate" as part of their mission of preserving the German population. If "nature is cruel... we too must be cruel."

In *Trial and Error*, Weizmann preferred the image of the French *colons* in Tunisia and British settlers in Canada and Australia as models, while also demonstrating marked sympathy for the white settlers in South Africa.

In a note Weizmann sent to President Truman on 27 November 1947, the colonial tendency to draw a sharp line between a technologically advanced "European" community and "backward natives" is evident. Describing the Zionist community in Palestine, Weizmann said that it consisted mainly of "an educated peasantry and a skilled industrial class living at high standards." To this bright image he contrasted the bleak one of "illiterate and impoverished communities [in Palestine] bearing no resemblance to the Zionist community." Weizmann did not bother to explain to the American president the reason for this state of affairs, nor why, after 50 years of British and Zionist colonialism and enlightenment, the light of civilisation had not yet dawned.

Taking its point of departure from such colonial racial myths, the Balfour Declaration did not hesitate to refer to the Arab Muslims and Christians of Palestine, who made up over 90 per cent of the population, as the "non-Jewish communities." In other words, the indigenous majority was already being relegated to the status of a minority in the name of the superior rights of Europe's surplus. In an extraordinary display of imperialist disdain, Balfour once wrote (in a memorandum dated 11 August, 1919), "In Palestine we do not propose ever to go through the form of consulting the wishes of the present inhabitants of the country, though the American [King-Crane] Commission has been going through the form of asking what they are." As for the public proclamations and liberal safeguard clauses, they were to be dumped: "The Powers have made no statement of fact which is not admittedly wrong and no declaration of policy which, at least in the letter, they have not always intended to violate." The dominant colonial powers made the decisions, and the Zionists settler-colonists took full advantage of the international power structure.

The central Zionist premise of Jewish peoplehood implies two transfers, one of Jews and the other of Arabs. The rationalising myths, whether founded on claims of racial superiority, sacred rights, or Zionist socialist humanism, imply the nonexistence or at least the marginal existence of the Arabs and the need for their physical removal, partially or wholly. The transfer of the Arabs is the *sine qua non* for the establishment of a Zionist state for the Jews.

As for Weizmann, evidence is not lacking that he, too, was fully aware of the plans for the transfer of the Arabs. Lord Boothby, a close friend of the Zionist leader, stated in a 1964 BBC programme that the Balfour Declaration, to which Weizmann had devoted too much energy, "had made provisions for the Arabs to be moved elsewhere." When the statement caused an uproar, Weizmann's widow wrote to Lord Boothby "confirming that he was correct." A senior staff officer of the Weizmann Archives in Israel also stated that "the Arabs were never mentioned in the original draft and, by way of omission, the possibility of a transfer becomes plausible."

Much earlier, on 13 August, 1937, the *Jewish Chronicle* published a document initiated by Weizmann, indicating that he regarded the whole success of the partition plan as dependent on "whether the government genuinely did or did not wish to carry out this recommendation" for a population transfer. Though the memorandum was secret, its authenticity "has never been denied [and] the Zionist named as furnishing it to the *Chronicle* was suspended by the Zionist Action Committee." Herzl had said that not everything needs to be revealed to the public. Perhaps it was with this in mind that Weizmann winked at a friend of his when Herbert Samuel, British High Commissioner to Palestine, called "for Zionist-Arab partnership." The friend recorded that "one might as well expect a ferret to cooperate with a rabbit."

In ... 'Earning a Homeland,' dated 1915, Ben Gurion compared the Zionist settlement to the American settlement in the New World, conjuring up the image of the 'fierce fights' the American colonists fought against 'wild nature and wilder redskins.' It is significant that he reduced the 'redskins' to the level of nature, or even lower, for they are 'wilder'

The unethical nature of political Zionism was admitted by Arthur Ruppin who, being in charge of Zionist colonisation during the 1920s and 1930s, had privileged access to accurate information. In 1928, in trying to face the issue of the native Palestinians without evasiveness, he reached the conclusion that it was difficult "to realise Zionism and still bring it constantly into line with the demands of general ethics." By 1936, he had to admit it was not only "difficult, but simply impossible." Describing the very process of the colonisation he sponsored, he said, "On every site where we purchase land and where we settle people, the present cultivators will inevitably be dispossessed." Concluding, he remarked that, as long as Zionist work in Palestine was carried on against the will of the Arabs, "there is no alternative but that lives should be lost." Ruppin even warned against what he termed Herzl's "imperialist approach," for he felt that the implementation of Herzl's concept of the Jewish state was predicated on disregarding the presence of the Arabs.

Dayan was also capable of similar insights. In discussing the alternatives as he saw them, he fully realised that Zionism was faced with two choices: "either making allowances for the views and desires of the Arabs and putting an end to Zionism," or "carrying on with immigration, land purchase and settlement, while denying the right of the Arabs of Palestine to determine the future of the country."

Ruppin and Dayan opted for the course inevitably leading to more warfare and loss of life. "It is our destiny," said Ruppin, "to be in a state of continued warfare with the Arabs. This situation may well be undesirable, but such is the reality." In fairness to Ruppin, though, one must add that his surrender to the logic of his Zionist position was not complete, and he remained until the time of his death a tormented soul trying to find a humane and just way out. But Dayan's conclusion, with which he reconciled himself long ago without any evidence of regret or remorse, was that there was no choice — *ein breira*: Israel will simply have to go on fighting, expanding, and displacing the native people of Palestine.

There is no dearth of evidence that the proponents of Zionism were prepared to follow wherever their nationalist ideology led them. In 1919, Israel Zangwill remarked that the Palestinian Arabs would be gradually transferred and settled in what he called the new and vast Arabian Kingdom, for, as he logically perceived (given his Zionist convictions), "only thus can Palestine become a 'Jewish National Home." Zangwill, too, like Ruppin and others, later realised the inherent racism of the Zionist scheme. As he put it in *The Voice of Jerusalem*, published in 1920, the Zionists had either "to grapple with the problem of a large alien population," or drive them out "by the sword... as our forefathers did."

Joseph Weitz, who replaced Ruppin as the Jewish Agency representative in charge of settlement, reported in the 29 September, 1967, issue of *Davar*, organ of the Histadrut, that in 1940 he and other Zionist leaders concluded that there was "no room for both peoples together in this country." The achievement of Zionist objectives, he realised, required "a Palestine or at least Western Palestine (west of the Jordan river) without Arabs." He wrote that it was necessary "to transfer the Arabs from here to the neighbouring countries. To transfer all of them... And only after such transfer will the country be able to absorb millions of our brethren." The support of top Zionist figures had been secured, Weitz said, and "some preliminary preparations were made in order to put this theory into practice." Similarly, Leo Motzkin, a member of the Zionist Executive, recognised that the only way out of a Jewish-Arab conflict was resettlement of the Arabs elsewhere. And again in 1914, Motzkin and Sokolow toyed with the same idea."

By 1945, the transfer of the Arab population of Palestine was an accepted goal. In an article written that year, Hannah Arendt pointed out that the transfer of the Palestinian Arabs "was earnestly discussed a few years ago in general Zionist circles." We know that by then the transfer was no longer a subject of debate; it had become, at an earlier date, more or less official Zionist policy espoused by most Zionist schools and trends. Item 2 of the enlarged programme of the Zionist Organisation, presented in 1943 to General Hurley, President Roosevelt's personal envoy to the Middle East, referred to "an eventual transfer of the Arab population to Iraq."

Vladimir Jabotinsky condemned this Zionist "evacuation prattle" because it was "downright criminal". His Zionist biographer, Joseph Schechtman, went on to say that Jabotinsky was no admirer of the Arabs and realised that no *modus vivendi* could be worked out. Consequently, he felt that a Jewish majority had to be "achieved against the wish of the country's present Arab majority," a presumably less criminal act than evacuation from the Revisionist point of view.

But the temptation of a population transfer was nevertheless too strong. Jabotinsky envisaged the prospect of voluntary and "organised migration" of the Arabs, and a paper written by a Jewish-American "philanthropist" on a population transfer did not fail to impress him deeply. This Revisionist theoretician, even though irritated by the Zionists' "evacuation prattle," worked out a little conspiracy to get the Arabs out. He proposed that the Zionist Organisation openly oppose Arab migration from Palestine, thereby putting to rest the fears of the Arabs that the transfer scheme was Zionist-supported. On the contrary, the natives would think that the Zionists wanted them to stay on because they wanted to exploit them. Like obstinate children, they would then opt to leave. The scheme was more simplistic than Machiavellian, for the Arabs proved less ignorant than he had imagined and more suspicious than he had hoped.

Nor was the plan for transferring the natives confined to those who settled for capitalistic or merely nationalistic reasons: it was also the plan acquiesced to by those who settled in Palestine in order to establish an egalitarian and idealistic society. To cite an example, Dov Ber Borochov (1881-1917), the Russian Zionist and father of the Zionist "left," showed remarkable awareness of the fact that the territorialist solution — that is, the transfer and settlement of the Jews in a territory of their own — could not occur "*without a bitter struggle*, without cruelty and injustices, without suffering for the innocent and guilty alike." In outlining his vision for the future of the natives, he stated that they "will be economically and culturally absorbed by those who bring order to the land and develop its productive forces. The Jewish immigrants will build up Palestine and the native population will in time be absorbed by the Jews, both economically and culturally." The history of Zionist settlement will be "written in sweat, tears, and blood".

But there were some voices of dissent in the background, persistently reminding the Zionists of the injustices that were about to be committed. A leading voice was that of Ahad Ha'am, who declared that "Palestine was not only a small land but [also] not an empty one." In 1920, three years after the Balfour Declaration, he warned once more against the Zionist view of the Arab people as "non-existent," which made some Arabs believe that "the Jews were coming to drive them from their soil."

Sir Edwin Montagu argued in 1917 that the Zionist state or homeland meant that the Jews would drive out the present inhabitants of Palestine and would be put in "all positions of preference." In 1920, Israel Zangwill wrote that, without a solution to the Arab problem, "he did not see that a Jewish state could arise at all, but only a state of friction."

Some of the early Zionist settlers, of whom Nordau and Herzl were probably aware, were shocked by the basic lack of ethics in the Zionist scheme. They raised their voices in protest against "deluding the Jewish people," declaring that Zionism "promised the people a homeland, but the country has been occupied by another people for generations, and the same country *cannot be the homeland* of two different peoples."

These may have been prophetic voices offering a no-alternative programme, but there were others with pragmatic ideas. Isaac Epstein (1862-1943) contended that it was a mistake "to regard Palestine as a barren waste," and drew attention to the fact that the Palestinian peasant was "anxious to add a strip of uncultivated land to his lot." He indicated that the Zionists, in the process of acquiring land for their settlement, forced many Arabs and Druzes from their fields, depriving them of their only source of livelihood. Epstein recognised that the purchase of the land was legally justifiable, "but the political and moral aspect was more complicated." This point has been completely lost on today's Zionists, who argue that the land was "purchased" as if Palestine had been up for sale.

Likewise, many of the individual dissenters were severely attacked by the Zionists. People like Epstein were reprimanded for their "diaspora way of thinking," and were told that "the main thing we should take into account should be what is good and effective for ourselves." Some of their detractors argued with the dissenters and "arrogantly dismissed the Arabs as 'a negligible quantity'." One who attacked the position of the Jewish dissenters declared, "Everywhere in the world there is a Jewish problem. And what are people doing about it? Here there is an Arab problem. So what can we do?"

Many of those who expressed doubts were either scoffed at or ignored. The Hebrew writer Moshe Smilansky described a meeting of the much-idealised Jewish *halutzim* in Rehovoth in 1891, at which some questions concerning the Arabs were asked:

"The land in Judea and Galilee is occupied by the Arabs."

"Well, we'll take *it* from them."

"How?" (Silence)

"A revolutionary doesn't ask naive questions."

"Well, then, 'revolutionary,' tell us how?"

The answer came forth in matter-of-fact

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Illustration: Gamil Shafik

terms: "It's very simple. We'll harass *them until they get out... Let them go to* Transjordan." When an anxious voice *tried to find out whether this was the end* or not, the answer once more was definite and unqualified: "As soon as we have a big settlement here, we'll seize the land, we'll become strong and then we'll take care of the Left Bank. We'll expel them from there too. Let them go back to the Arab countries."

Advice about the danger of Herzl's imperialist approach went unheeded. Ahad Ha'am, in a letter to Smilansky dated February 1914, noticed that the Zionists became quite angry toward those who reminded them that there was "still another people in Eretz Yisrael." The Zionist leadership was in no mood to heed warnings. Like the Zionist poet Saul Tschernikowsky (1875-1943), they preferred to see the Arabs as savages to be hunted down. As Ahad Ha'am pointed out, Zionist settlers "think that the Arabs are all savages who live like animals and do not understand what is happening around. This is, however, a great error."

The native Palestinians, reduced by the Zionists to subhuman or marginal status, had to be expelled or transferred. Zionism, after all, presupposed a Palestine without Palestinians, "a land without people". Nevertheless, when the majority of the Palestinians left Palestine in 1948, Zionist spokesmen claimed that this happened at the instigation of Arab leaders. This allegation was perhaps a Zionist afterthought, concocted when it was discovered that the world's reaction to the Palestinians' exodus could be detrimental to the Zionist image. Walid Khalidi, a Palestinian intellectual, noted that early Zionist writings on the subject of the refugees made no reference to Arab orders for the Palestinians to leave. In August and September of 1948, Moshe Sharett, Israel's first foreign minister, disclaimed any Israeli responsibility for the exodus but did not allude to any Arab orders to evacuate. Weizmann also concluded his autobiography in August 1948 with references to the Arab exodus, but made no mention of such Arab orders. Not until 1949 was it found convenient to perpetuate the myth of the "orders by Arab leaders."

The Zionist allegations have been rebutted in more than one study by Arab and Western authors alike, the best-known by Walid Khalidi and Erskine Childers, the British journalist. The latter examined "every official Israeli statement," and found that "no primary evidence of [Arab] evacuation orders was ever produced."

Khalidi and Childers devoted much time to the search for possible Arab sources (newspapers, radio broadcasts, government archives) that might contain the primary evidence never cited in the Israeli allegations. Khalidi examined the files of the press releases of the Arab League, the minutes of the meetings of the Arab League Council, and the resolutions taken by the League Council and the various committees. Nowhere did he come across any mention or trace of any *evacuation order.*

He then turned his attention to the Arab press. Since it was impossible to read all newspapers, he concentrated on three leading dailies: *Al-Ahram*, the Egyptian daily that is widely read in the Arab world; *Al-Hayat*, a Lebanese newspaper more concerned with Palestinians affairs than any other Arab newspaper outside of Palestine; and *Al-Difaa*, the leading Palestinian newspaper. He examined all *the issues published during the war years.* There were no reports of any order by *official Arab sources purportedly urging* evacuation.

It is claimed that sometimes such orders were broadcast by radio. Again, "no dates, names of stations, or texts of messages were ever cited." Childers, who visited Israel in 1958 as a guest of its Foreign Office, was repeatedly told that he would be shown the proof he sought, but none was produced. On his own initiative, Childers doggedly researched the matter through the records of the BBC broadcasts, covering all radio transmissions in and around Palestine in 1948. His findings confirmed that there was no evidence of "a single order, or appeal, or suggestion about evacuation from Palestine from any Arab radio station, inside or outside of Palestine, in 1948."

On the contrary, Khalidi and Childers found radio broadcasts, official memos and statements, newspaper and magazine articles that appealed to the Arabs not to flee. In February 1948, the Egyptian weekly *Akher Sa'a*, perhaps the most widely read periodical in the Arab world at that time, branded as traitors any Palestinian Arabs who left their country. A message appealing to the Palestinians to stay, praising those who remained for their heroism and endurance, was broadcast by King Abdullah on behalf of the Arab League, as reported by the Sharq Al-Adna radio on May 4, 1948.

Childers cited similar Arab appeals, giving dates and contents of the texts. On 24 April at 1200 hours GMT, Al-Inqaz Radio, the Arab Liberation Army's station, warned against "certain defeatist elements and Jewish agents" who were spreading news to create chaos and panic among the Palestinians. It branded as "cowards" those who deserted "their houses, villages or cities," and threatened them with severe punishment. In *The Evasive Peace*, John Davis cited other evidence indicating that "the Arab authorities continuously exhorted Palestinian Arabs not to leave the country."

Unable to uncover any of the purported "original" eviction orders, either through the assistance of the Israelis or through his own research, Childers also investigated the veracity of some of the secondary Israeli evidence. One such example presented by the Israelis and their supporters is a statement attributed to the Greek Catholic archbishop of Galilee. It "appears in virtually every official Israeli tract, in most of the annual Israeli statements to the United Nations on the Palestine refugees, and in countless books circulating throughout the world." Abba Eban (a former Israeli foreign minister) *told the United Nations Special Committee* in 1957 that Archbishop Hakim *had "fully confirmed" that the Arabs had* been urged to flee by their own leaders. Childers took the shortest course of action, and in 1958 wrote to the archbishop asking for verification. The archbishop's reply was a flat denial of the Israeli allegation. He wrote as follows:

"At no time did I state that the flight of the refugees was due to the orders, explicit or implicit, of their leaders, military or political, to leave the country and seek shelter in the adjacent Arab territories. On the contrary, no such orders were ever made by the military commanders, or by the Higher Arab Committee, or, indeed, by the Arab League or Arab states. I have not the least doubt that any such allegations are sheer concoctions and falsification."

Having investigated other secondary evidence, Childers reached the same conclusion — that quite often Israeli spokesmen cited quotations out of context, giving *them a meaning not originally intended.*

It is surely common sense that for a whole people, made up largely of peasants, to be uprooted from their ancient homeland, something stronger than government appeal by radio would have been required. In a letter dated 1899, Ludwig Gumplowicz, the Austro-Hungarian sociologist who brought the writings of the Arab historian Ibn Khaldun to the attention of the modern world, charged Herzl with political naiveté and asked him rhetorically, "You want to found a state without bloodshed?... Without force or cunning? Just like that, open and honest — by easy instalments." In these few penetrating remarks, the Jewish sociologist put the hard facts before Herzl.

"Force and cunning" were most certainly instrumental in building the Zionist state. News of Zionist terrorism reached India as early as 1937, prompting the Congress Party to issue a resolution condemning the reign of terror in Palestine. Maahatma Gandhi, one of the first statesmen to deal with the subject of the Jews and Palestine, wrote in 1946 that the Jews erred grievously by resorting to "naked terrorism" and by depending for the realisation of their plans on "American money or British arms." One year later, in a reply to a question by a Reuters correspondent, he warned the Zionists against the use of terrorism.

There were many eyewitness accounts by those who fought in the 1948 War or by civilian observers. Uri Avnery, former member of the Knesset and editor of *Haolam Hazeh*, has distinguished three phases in the war. In the first phase the Palestinian Arabs, he said, committed atrocities against the Zionist settlers. In the second phase there was no uniform policy but, as a general rule, the Arabs were encouraged to evacuate their towns and villages by both Arab leaders and the Zionist Army. As for the third and last phase (that is, after 15 May), "the eviction of Arab civilians had become an aim of David Ben Gurion and his government."

Archbishop Hakim is another eyewitness: "As soon as hostilities began between Israel and the Arab states, it became the settled policy of the government to drive the Arabs out of the localities which its forces occupied, notably, Ramleh and Lydda and all the villages around them."

In discussing the alternatives as he saw them.. [Moshe Dayan] fully realised that Zionism was faced with two choices: 'either making allowances for the views and desires of the Arabs and putting an end to Zionism,' or 'carrying on with immigration, land purchase and settlement, while denying the right of the Arabs of Palestine to determine the future of the country'

A forced Arab exodus was a matter of Zionist/Israeli planning, and the policy was implemented through two methods: terrorising the Arabs and/or subjecting them to physical violence. Nathan Chofshi, who had been a Jewish settler in Palestine since 1908, wrote to the *Jewish Newsletter* in 1959, giving his version of what he had witnessed in 1948. "The Jews," he said, "forced the Arabs to leave cities and villages which they did not want to leave of their own free will. Some of them were driven out by force of arms; others were *made to leave by deceit, lying and false* promises."

In a report submitted to the United Nations on September 16, 1948, Count Bernadotte, the United Nations mediator in Palestine, pointed out that "the exodus of the Palestinian Arabs resulted from panic created by fighting in their communities, by rumours concerning real or alleged acts of terrorism or expulsion." Likewise, Major Edgar O'Ballance wrote that "it was the Jewish policy to encourage the Arabs to quit their homes, and they used psychological warfare in urging them to do so."

Naked terrorism was used throughout the war. In the last phase, however, acts of physical violence as well as psychological warfare were resorted to in order to frighten and drive out the inhabitants. This is a matter of mere analytical convenience, for the two methods overlapped and were even complementary elements in the Zionist scheme. In the Deir Yassin massacre, for instance, the Zionists took good care to familiarise all the Palestinians with the event, in order to gain extra advantages from it by instilling fear in the hearts of the people.

The most common method of terrorising the Arabs was the use of loudspeakers and radio broadcasts to create an atmosphere of panic in a population that was without leadership, especially after the failure of the 1936 Arab revolt against the British and the Zionists. To cite an example, at 1700 hours, on 19 February, 1948, the Haganah radio warned the Arabs that "they would be ignored in the conflict of ambitions between Arab leaders." On 10 March 1948, at 1800 hours, the radio reported that "the Arab states were conspiring with Britain against the Palestinians." On 14 March, 1948, at 1800 hours, it reported that "the people of Jaffa are so frightened that they are remaining indoors."

On 15 May, author Harry Levin noted in his diary the message he had heard being broadcast from the Zionist loudspeaker vans in Arabic. The Arabs were urged "to leave the district before 5.15am" and were advised to "take pity on your wives and children and get out of this bloodbath... Get out by the Jericho road that is still open to you. If you stay, you invite disaster."

It has often been reported that the Jewish mayor of Haifa asked the Arabs to remain in their homes, but his "appeal was neither backed nor reiterated by any Zionist in a responsible position." On the contrary, the inevitable Haganah loudspeakers toured the country, threatening people and urging them to flee with their families, as reported in Jon Kimche's *The Seven Fallen Pillars*.

Thus, the suggestion of terror and impending disaster, of a complete breakdown, was one of the main themes emphasised by the Haganah radio and loudspeakers in the Arab communities. Another theme was the imminent danger of epidemic diseases. On 20 March, at 19.30 hours, the Zionist Free Hebrew Radio began a chilling broadcast in Arabic in which it asked, "Do you know that it is a sacred duty to inoculate yourselves hastily *against cholera, typhus and similar diseases*, as it is expected that such diseases will break out in April and May among Arabs *in urban agglomerations?*" The same theme was used on 18 February 1948, when the Zionist authorities assured the Arabs by radio that the Arab Liberation volunteers "have brought smallpox with them," and added on February 27, *that the "Palestinian doctors were fleeing."*

Yigal Allon, former Israeli foreign minister, in *The Book of the Palmach*, gives an account of his "original" contribution to terror tactics:

"I gathered all of the Jewish *mukhtars* [mayors], who have contact with Arabs in different villages, and asked them to whisper in the ears of some Arabs, that a great Jewish reinforcement has arrived in Galilee and that it is going to burn all of the villages of the Huleh. They should suggest to these Arabs, as their friends, to escape while there is time.

"The rumour," Allon explained, "spread in all areas of the Huleh that it is time to flee. The flight numbered myriad. The tactic reached its goal completely. The wide areas were cleaned." The "cleansing" metaphor is quite appropriate to express the state of mind of a purist Zionist colonist who not only wanted the land, but also wanted to depopulate it.

Turning from mere terrorising to the straightforward use of violence, one is struck by the level of Zionist creativity displayed. One of the techniques developed by the gentile colonialist Orde Wingate was night raids on Arab villages. This type of raid was mounted by the Haganah and Palmach during the 1948 War. As the Israeli historian Arieh Ytshaki pointed out, the tactics were simple. They "consisted of attacking the enemy village and destroying as many houses there as possible." The results were equally simple: "A great number of old people, women and children were killed wherever the attacking force faced resistance."

But it appears that the Haganah, especially toward the end of the Mandate, made significant improvements in their tactics. In their attack on Arab villages, "Haganah men would first silently place explosive charges around the stone houses and drench the window and door frames in petrol." Once this preparatory step was accomplished, they would "then open fire, *simultaneously dynamiting and burning* the sleeping inhabitants to death."

The case of the attack on the village of Deir Yassin, *"the first Arab village to be* captured by Jewish forces," and the *massacre that followed*, are well documented. Two hundred and fifty unarmed Palestinian men, women and children were killed by Zionist terrorists on 2 April 1948. The massacre itself was staged by the members of the Irgun, headed by Begin, but at a time when the Haganah was "responsible for all military operations," and when all plans had to be cleared with the military arm of the Jewish Agency.

The *Encyclopedia of Zionism and Israel* mentions the fact that in March 1948 the Zionist Action Committee (the Zionist Executive) "had approved a temporary arrangement maintaining Irgun's separate existence but made its operational plans subject to prior approval by the Haganah Command." William Polk, in *Backdrop to Tragedy*, recorded the little-known fact that the Haganah "had assisted in the capture of the village and had entrusted its inhabitants to a group known to be terrorist."

One month before the massacre, the *Mandate Government of Palestine* condemned the Jewish Agency for condoning terrorism, and three days after the massacre, Deir Yassin was handed over to the Haganah to serve as an airstrip.

Background Notes on Current Themes, published on 16 March 1969, by the Information Division of Israel's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, stated in a most unequivocal manner that what it termed the "battle for Deir Yassin" was "an integral inseparable episode in the battle for Jerusalem." Israeli Prime Minister Menahem Begin, in his book *The Revolt*, also asserted that "the capture of Deir Yassin and holding it were one stage in the general plan," and that the operation was undertaken "with the knowledge of Haganah and with the approval of its commander," despite the latter's equivocation and despite the outrage expressed by Jewish Agency officials and Zionist spokesmen.

Perhaps this coordination of efforts, this neat division of labour, was what Weizmann had in mind when, in a rare moment of moral insight, he expressed his revulsion at "not only the murderous terrorism of Begin's Irgun but also the clean acts of violence [sic] undertaken by Ben Gurion's Haganah."

Deir Yassin became a prototype for several other "successful" Zionist raids. In *Yediot Aharonot* of 14 April, 1972, examples of other Deir Yassins that took place in 1948 were cited:

On 30-31 January, the Palmach forces attacked the village of Al-Sheikh under the leadership of Haim Avinoan, killing "sixty of the enemy, mostly civilians" inside their own houses.

On 14-15 February, the Palmach's third regiment attacked the village of Sa'sa', destroying a "total of twenty houses... over the heads of the occupants, causing the death of sixty people, mostly women and children." This operation was described as "exemplary."

Zionist forces mounted "indiscriminate reprisal attacks on the Arab civil transport system causing the death of numerous innocent citizens." The source does not mention the number of casualties.

Ytshaki, however, singled out what happened in Lydda as "the best-known Palmach operation." The Lydda (Lod) operation, known as the Dani Campaign, was mounted to suppress an Arab uprising in July 1948 against Israeli occupation. "Instructions were issued to shoot anyone seen on the streets." The Palmach soldiers "opened heavy fire on all pedestrians and brutally suppressed this insurrection within a few hours. They moved from one house to another, firing at any moving target. As a consequence, two hundred and fifty Arabs were killed, according to the report of the brigade's commander." Kenneth Bilby, a *New York Herald Tribune* correspondent who entered Lydda on 12 July, reported that Moshe Dayan led a jeep commando column into the town "with rifles, stens, and sub-machine guns blazing. It coursed through the main streets, blasting at everything that moved... the corpses of Arab men, women and even children were strewn about the streets in the wake of this ruthlessly brilliant charge." When Ramleh was seized the next day, "all Arab men of military age were rounded up and penned into special enclosures." Once more the vans toured the two towns and blared out the habitual warnings. Then, on July 13, the loudspeakers gave final orders, naming certain bridges as the exodus route."

From Weizmann's point of view, the Arab exodus was understandably a miraculous simplification of Israel's task. Weitz viewed the outcome of the war as doubly miraculous — a territorial victory and a demographic final solution.

There were dead bodies everywhere

One year later, **Zeina Khodr** talks to the survivors of the Qana massacre. On that day, Lebanese civilians sought refuge from the Israeli operation "Grapes of Wrath" only to die in a UN base

Qana is a shanty town in southern Lebanon. The Lebanese believe it is here that Jesus performed his first miracle when he changed water into wine. But today Qana is known for something else. It is the site of the massacre of more than 100 innocent Lebanese men, women and children by the Israeli army.

It has been a year since the Qana massacre occurred, but the smell of death still lingers in the air. Almost everyone here lost a loved one if not his whole family when Israeli gunners slammed shells into the Fijian United Nations base of Qana on 18 April.

Those who perished in the attack were buried next to the base in a communal grave where mostly charred and mangled remains of the victims were laid to rest. But the pain and tragedy continue to haunt the survivors.

"How do you expect me to forget? I lost my whole family, my husband and three children, including a 17-day-old baby boy," 25-year-old Fatimah Balhas told *Al-Ahram Weekly* as tears streamed down her face. "We were sitting in the camp when the shells started raining down on us. Two of my children were on my lap. My husband and my son were next to me. Shells exploded next to us and seconds later I looked around and everyone was gone."

Fatimah says she cannot sleep without sedatives and she constantly imagines that her family is in front of her. "I have no reason to live anymore," she said as she looked through a family album, her hands shaking. "We took the pictures two months before the massacre. I had them developed after they were killed." Fatimah also lost her brother, 16-year-old Abdel-Karim. "His head was severed from his body."

Fatimah's mother Umm Ali says the pain and suffering have not eased even though a year has passed. "My grandchildren and my son did not deserve to die. What was their crime?" she asked. "I always see footage of the massacre on television. I get upset but I still watch it because I keep seeing my family. Maybe if we had not gone to the base my family would be sitting with me now."

After Israeli warnings, hundreds of villagers fled to the UN base in Qana believing they would be safe there. The Israeli government has stated that the bombardment was an "unfortunate mistake", but the Israelis knew the refugees were there. The UN has had bases in the area for 18 years. A UN report found that Israel's shelling of the base was "unlikely to have been the result of gross technical or procedural errors although that could not be completely ruled out."

The report stopped short of accusing Israel of deliberately shelling the base — the bloodiest episode in Israel's 16-day air, artillery and naval attack against Lebanon. The report stated that 36 impact sites were found in the Qana area as well as fragments of 155mm shells throughout the UN compound.

Contrary to repeated Israeli denials, two Israeli helicopters and a remotely piloted vehicle were present in the Qana area at the time of the shooting. An amateur video taken by a UN soldier shows an Israeli drone flying near the UN base and was used as the basis for the UN report. The drone should have shown the Israelis exactly what they were firing at and contrary to Israeli claims, the video shows evidence of heavy bombardment as opposed to an accidental misfiring.

"Israel was not hitting military targets but innocent civilians," Hajj Saedallah Balhas told the *Weekly*. The 60-year-old man lost 14 members of his family in the massacre. He visits their grave-sites three times a day. "I have lost my mind. There were dead bodies everywhere. I could not identify my children, brothers, sisters. At that point I thought my whole life was destroyed."

Hajj Saedallah hangs an identification card from his neck with the pictures of those he lost in Qana. "I never take this off," he explains. "This and the pictures in the house. They are the only memories I have left."

The survivors and those who lost loved ones will never forgive Israel for the massacre. Mounira Balhas lost her husband and daughter. "I lost them before my very eyes. I will never forgive Israel for what it did. They killed my family for nothing. I curse them every second of every day," she said. "There will never be peace in my heart. Even if peace is achieved, no Israeli will ever come near my house."

Mounira's four-year-old daughter Lina had to undergo surgery and was hospitalised in a London hospital for six months because she was seriously injured in the massacre. "We thought Lina had died. She was taken to a hospital in the south for treatment and then to London. She is now able to walk but she cannot speak anymore. Doctors say she will probably regain her speech in two years. But they are not sure," she said.

Ali Balhas lost his parents, brothers, sisters, his wife and child in the massacre. But his three-year-old son Hussein miraculously survived. Fijian soldiers found Hussein among the bodies after the massacre and took him for dead. They placed him in a body bag. Three hours later, someone at the hospital noticed a body bag moving and found Hussein alive.

"I was not at the camp at the time of the shelling. Afterwards, I headed to the camp and all I saw was blood. The camp was burning and I could not see anything. I lost my mind," Ali told the *Weekly*. "I thought Hussein was dead until someone found him alive in the hospital. When I saw him he kept asking for his mother. I could not tell him that she had died," he went on.

Hussein, who was two at the time of the massacre, underwent surgery on his right leg in London.

The refugees thought they were safe at the UN base but they were wrong. The Qana massacre is one of the blackest and deadliest in Lebanon's history. The Lebanese are unlikely to forget this dark episode in their country's history no matter how much time passes.









Images of devastation, murder and loss: (Clockwise from left) a home destroyed in Sabra and Shatila; a *brother lost in Qana*; a baby girl murdered in Qana; a mother and daughter "survive" Sabra and Shatila.

"Qana has become a milestone in the Arab-Israeli conflict, alongside Deir Yassin, Kafr Qassem and Sabra *and Shatila*," wrote Aluf Ben in the Israeli newspaper *Ha'aretz* on 21 April, 1996.

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An ordinary massacre

The inhabitants of Deir Yassin were slaughtered by young Zionists who displayed the blood on their hands with pride, and displayed the spoils of war before slitting throats. Even this, writes Gamil Matar, was mundane to an ideology bred in violence

On 10 April 1948, the day following the massacre, Jacques de Reynier, *head of the International Red Cross delegation in Palestine*, visited the village of Deir Yassin. He described what he saw: "They [the Jewish terrorists] were all young teenagers, male and female... the great majority of them were still covered in blood and carrying knives in their hands... One young woman showed off her blood-stained hands as if they were war medals."

On that day the news of the massacre spread all over Palestine and the Arab world. David Ben Gurion hastened to offer his apologies to King Abdallah even before the creation of the state of Israel. Meanwhile, Menahem Begin, the leader of the gang responsible for the massacre, objected to Ben Gurion's apology, saying that it would have been preferable had Ben Gurion not put on a cloak of leniency. In his book *The Revolution*, Begin attributed the emigration of more than 600,000 Arab Palestinians to the massacre of Deir Yassin. Begin also wrote that the Deir Yassin incident and the publicity which surrounded it helped pave the way for subsequent Israeli victories, stressing that the massacre was particularly instrumental in saving Tiberias and in the invasion of Haifa.

The Deir Yassin massacre was neither the first nor the last in a series of massacres carried out by Zionists in Palestine. It remains a highly potent symbol, however. For instance, the victims were residents of an Arab village whose leaders had just signed a peace agreement with the Zionist leadership, yet neither Menahem Begin, Yitzhak Shamir nor the leader of the massacre chose to abide by the terms of the agreement. Israel maintained this attitude consistently throughout the different phases of the Arab-Israeli conflict and settlement.

Israel failed to abide by the terms of its peace treaty with Egypt when it delayed the surrender of Taba, for instance. Israel also failed to abide by the spirit and essence of Camp David when it carried out acts of aggression against Iraq and occupied south Lebanon. In this way, Israel hoped to embarrass Egypt before other Arab countries and to marginalise its regional role. More recently, Jordan and the *Palestinian Authority have both complained that the Israeli* government has reneged on its pledges under the Israeli-Jordanian peace treaty and the Oslo Accords. In other words, peace treaties are of little value to Zionists once they have served their purpose as necessary instruments for Israeli security objectives. Peace treaties have not put a stop to Israeli expansionist policies nor diminished the continued threat it poses to Arab security.

Deir Yassin also symbolised a new phase of development in the region where terrorism and violence prevailed. Whatever image the anti-Arab Western media chose to propagate with respect to the "violent nature" of Arabs or Muslims, it remains a historical fact that European violence, which did away with millions of lives in Europe's continental and international wars, is by far harsher and more ruthless than the violence they attribute to Arabs. Zionism was born and nurtured in a matrix of European violence. Abdel-Wahab Elmessiri has discussed this historical truth and the relationship between Zionism and the doctrine of violence and racism in Europe in *Zionism, Nazism and the End of History*. Elmessiri also discusses the manner in which Nazi crimes were used to justify and inspire Zionist crimes, and *how both crimes belong to the same civilisation and follow a similar* pattern.

Zionist terrorism began with the arrival of the first group of settlers. It is impossible to list here all the terrorist acts committed by Zionists before the 1948 war. A few well-known examples must suffice: the destruction of the King David Hotel in Jerusalem in 1946 by the Etzel organisation; the assassination of Lord Moyne in Cairo in 1944, masterminded by the Lehi organisation; the destruction of Roxy Cinema in Jerusalem in 1939; the famous explosion in the Haifa vegetable market which killed dozens of Arabs; another explosion in the same market two weeks later; yet a third explosion in the same place a year later in which 78 Arabs died and 124 were wounded; the assassination of Count Bernadotte, the UN's representative on 17 September 1948; and so forth.

Deir Yassin is a symbol of the schizophrenia ingrained in the Zionist personality. The massacre was carried out by young people familiar with the details of extermination procedures employed by the Nazis against Jews in Germany and other European countries. These young people, and their leaders before them, saw no contradiction in their *condemnation of Nazi* terrorism, including the burning of Jews, and their own brand of terrorism, including burning Arab villagers alive in Deir Yassin.

I believe that Binyamin Netanyahu himself fails to recognise such a contradiction. To Netanyahu and the young Zionist gangsters of the forties, terrorism is an act committed by others, by the *goyim*. But when Jews murder and burn Arabs, they do so in defence, to avert an act of terrorism. To Netanyahu, Menachem Begin, Yitzhak Shamir, Moshe Dayan, Ariel Sharon and many others, the crimes committed by Jews against Arabs are revenge for acts of terrorism perpetrated by Arabs and future acts that the Arabs will no doubt be guilty of some day.

Therefore — and Deir Yassin is once again a symbol — the leaders of the Israeli state, particularly those who established that state, have always gone to great lengths in resorting to terrorist violence that is guaranteed to provoke Arabs, who will in turn resort to violence; Israel may then retaliate with legitimate or state terrorism.

Deir Yassin was intended to instil terror amongst Palestinians all over Palestine, compelling them either to flee their land or to retaliate. Some fled; those who resorted to revenge were tracked down and murdered, together with their families. The vicious cycle continued. This is the nature of Zionism and today we may witness its practices as manifested in the Israeli government's settlement policies. Settlements are acts of terrorism; the victims are the land and its people, who depend on the land for their survival.

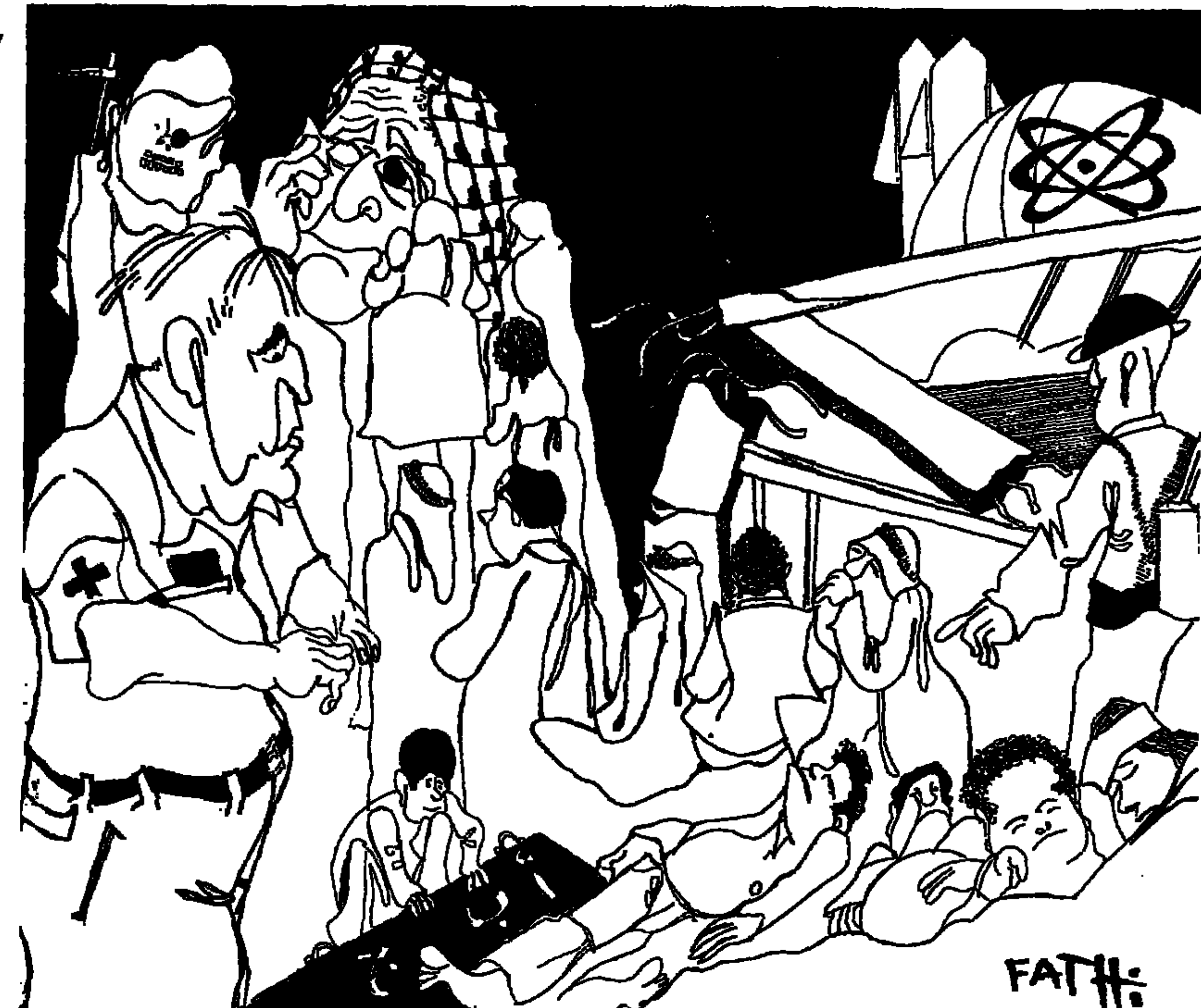
Israelis know very well that each plot of land confiscated by the Israeli government creates more Palestinian refugees. Israelis are also aware that land confiscation fuels the desire for revenge among the displaced. But when the victim seeks revenge, the state is ready with its weapons: detention, displacement, humiliation or murder.

Deir Yassin was a symbol of the vengeance inherent in Zionist terrorism. Around 300 young men and women tied up some of the villagers and loaded them into open cars — spoils of war, to be exhibited in Jerusalem before their throats were slit, back in the village. After the massacre, the terrorists refused to bury the victims at first, and instead waited for the Arabs of Jerusalem, whom they believed would come in search of their neighbours. A leader of one of the Haganah units described the scene in Deir Yassin: "It was a beautiful spring day, with the trees in full blossom. But the stench of death, destruction and the decomposing corpses emanated from every corner of the village as we buried the dead in one grave."

The logic of the Deir Yassin massacre is still employed today. The goal is for the Palestinians to understand that by remaining in Palestine they will be destroyed. Had television cameras been available at the time of Deir Yassin, the murderers would not have displayed the villagers in the streets before butchering them. Nor would they have left their corpses to rot after the massacre. Today, Palestinians and Arabs everywhere may watch as the children of the Intifada are shot, men and women beaten, Palestinian homes bombed and burned, south Lebanon is attacked, and Arabs are killed after taking refuge in a UN camp. They can also see the sarcastic smile on Netanyahu's face whenever he refers to or speaks to Arab leaders.

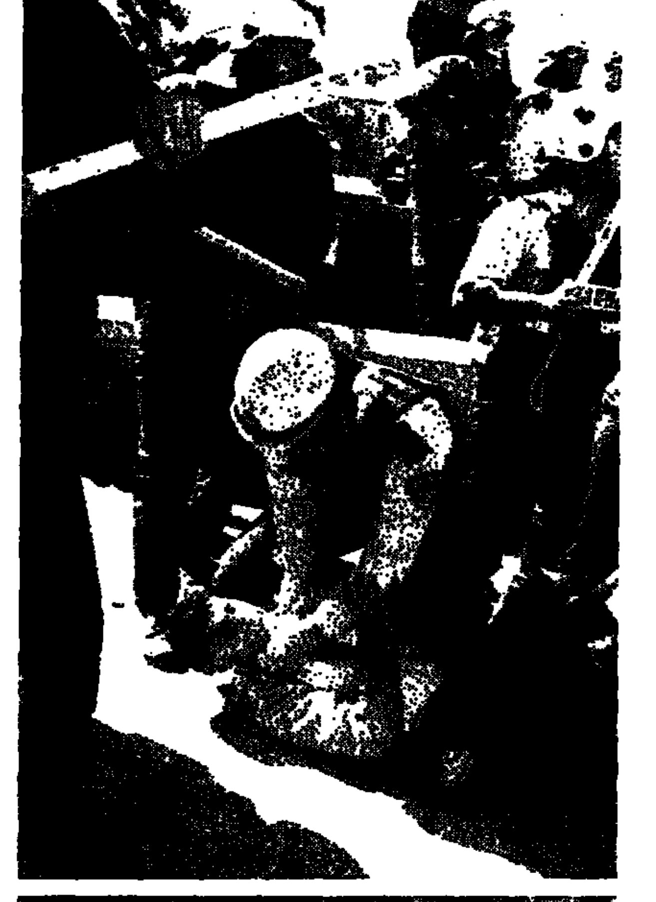
Netanyahu's description of the Arab League Council resolution as "diplomatic violence" was not a lapse. Israeli policy uses violence every day to accomplish its political, economic, "housing" and security practices, and considers these terrorist tactics the only way to achieve its national or international objectives. Israel considers any protest against these practices as acts of violence. While the Arab League Council did not recommend military action, Israel considered even the decision to reconsider normalisation as an act of violence. If the word violence had not been mentioned, Israel could not use its customary, insane logic to justify its own brand of terrorism: building settlements, dividing the West Bank with roads and Jewish settlements, starving the Palestinian people, and shooting Palestinians with live bullets.

It has been forty nine years since the Deir Yassin massacre took place, and 100 years since the first Zionist conference was held; it appears that there has been no change in the racist and terrorist Zionist mentality, a mentality nurtured in the very climate which bred fascism and Nazism.











Some 1,500 Palestinian youths and children were killed by Israeli bullets during the years of the Intifada. *Rabin ordered the breaking of children's arms as punishment for stone throwing.* The images above, were however captured by photographer Khaled El-Zaghary **in the period since the 1993 Oslo Accords**

Mapping out conquest

Where are the Arab villages occupied by Zionist colonists? Their names have been forgotten, writes Mahgoub Omar, as the map of Palestine disappears under a web of "administrative annexations" which aim, simply, to erase history itself

One of the less familiar weapons employed by the Israeli authorities in the battle over Jerusalem since the beginning of the Zionist invasion of Palestine at the turn of the century is the deliberate dissimulation of information. Facts which are kept secret are ultimately forgotten by generations who grow up without knowing the past — a history for which they will not be held accountable and which they are incapable of absorbing.

From the outset, this process of dissimulation was carried out in a number of ways: changing the names of neighbourhoods, villages and towns; altering the demographic composition and architectural style of targeted quarters; demolishing archaeological sites and surrounding Arab areas with huge housing complexes inhabited by hostile settlers. These measures were usually employed in conjunction with the forced eviction of the original residents, who were butchered — obliterated.

Facts were blurred on the spot or over a period of several years. The Israeli authorities always banked on the idea that the original name of a city would be forgotten if it was replaced. This occurred repeatedly and is still taking place in Palestine. A notable example is the fate of the Arab Palestinian city of Jaffa on the Mediterranean coast, known throughout history as the bride of the Mediterranean. At first, Zionist settlers built a small quarter next to Jaffa which eventually developed into a large quarter on the periphery of the city. Jaffa's Arab residents considered the growing quarter simply a Jewish block of apartment houses to the west of the city. In time, however, Jewish settlers gathered in the new area and its environs. As new Zionist institutions came to occupy more and more space, Jaffa city diminished in size; eventually; it became a quarter annexed to Tel Aviv — nothing more. Tel Aviv was now the big city, particularly after a great majority of the Arab residents of Jaffa were forcibly evicted; those who remained were deprived for many years of facilities and infrastructural development.

Jerusalem met with the same fate. *Jerusalem is 4,000 years old; it has* been called by many different names in languages other than Arabic. While the Arabic language and Arab tradition finally came to employ the name *Bait Al-Maqdis* (the Holy City), Latin languages on the whole called it *Hierusalem*, or variations thereupon.

After the Crusaders were driven away and the kingdom which they had established collapsed, Jews were allowed to live and practice their rites in Jerusalem, which fell under the Ottoman sultanate's rule. During the Crusaders' occupation, however, Jews were forbidden to live in Jerusalem. When the Zionists began building settlements in Palestine, a number of Jews settled in the old city. The Zionist Organisation built a number of housing units to the west of the city; these quarters were first called New Jerusalem but came to be known as West Jerusalem after the 1948 War. Land and property owned by Arab Palestinians, as well as land surrendered by the British mandate authorities to the Zionist Organisation and the Jewish Agency, were joined to West Jerusalem.

In 1948, when the first Arab-Israeli war erupted, the Zionist leadership planned to build a road that would link West Jerusalem to Tel Aviv, and to annihilate the residents of the villages which stood in the way. Deir Yassin, the scene of the famous massacre, was among those villages. There were over 400 people in the village when the Zionists launched their attack. Only 40 managed to escape: The others were butchered by members of Stern and Irgun, with the full knowledge and approval of Haganah and Palmach.

The plan behind the Deir Yassin massacre was known as Plan D. Some of those who implemented it are still alive. In 1980, Menahem Begin boasted that the massacre was instrumental in opening the way to Jerusalem, on one hand, and in the invasion of northeastern Palestine, on the other. Begin also attributed the collective flight of thousands of Arabs to the Zionist media's effective role in publicising news of the massacre.

While the world still marks the anniversary of the Deir Yassin massacre, many do not know that the village of Deir Yassin no longer exists. The village's original houses were demolished, the plots of land replaced by "public" gardens on which a new settlement was built. This settlement, together with others implanted after the inhabitants of occupied villages were evicted, and their homes destroyed, were administratively annexed to Jerusalem. All that is left of Deir Yassin is the memory of the massacre, still commemorated by Palestinians and Arabs today.

When people talk about Jerusalem today, they are referring to a city whose administrative boundaries have been expanded gradually. Every year, the Israeli authorities annex another Arab village on the pretext of expanding and upgrading the administration of Jerusalem. Israel Shahak, a professor at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, who is also a prominent advocate of human rights, has recorded the number of Arab villages annihilated by the Israel state since its creation and replaced by new quarters, known by Israeli names and filled with Jewish immigrants. According to Shahak, 385 villages have been wiped off the political and administrative map. Tens of thousands of villagers were murdered or evicted from their homes; entire Bedouin tribes living in the surrounding areas were driven off their land. By 1989, only 90 Arab villages which had existed before 1948 were still on the map.

Destroying villages is part and parcel of the Zionist plan to eradicate the name of Palestine — to obliterate its people, its very existence, as well as its past. When daily events are discussed in the news, irrespective of the details, Hebrew names are used to refer to old Arab villages. Listeners do not realise that the Hebrew names refer to villages that belonged to Arab Palestinians. Nor will younger generations understand that a central Zionist claim — that the settlers made an uninhabited desert wasteland bloom — is a lie. Had it not been for the massacre, no one would have remembered the name Deir Yassin. Visitors to the site are unaware that they are passing through land where hundreds of villagers were massacred. In 1948, Deir Yassin was situated along the western road between Jerusalem and cities on the Palestinian coast, about 12km from the administrative boundaries of old Jerusalem.

The annihilation of Deir Yassin was repeated in 29 other villages. Only four villages remained, and they were annexed after their occupation in 1967.

Expanding the administrative boundaries of cities is commonplace everywhere today, given the population pressure on the urban infrastructure. Expansion and annexation, however, do not entail changing the original names of old villages once these have been annexed to a larger entity. The eradication of the names of dozens of places under the pretext of expansion is equivalent to erasing history, and making it impossible for the original owners to reclaim their land. In other words, this process is akin to changing the identity of a place and enshrouding historical events in an impenetrable fog.

The current battle over the construction of settlements in Jebel Abu Ghneim is not just about land ownership, but also about sovereignty. The Israeli authorities are clearly engaged in attempts to change the identity of Arab Jerusalem. The Hebrew name Har Homa is used: the confiscated land of Jebel Abu Ghneim is not referred to, because the very mention of an Arab name would reveal the identity of the original owners of the land. This area was annexed to the Jerusalem area administration after 1967. By building housing units on Jebel Abu Ghneim, which separate the area from Bethlehem, the Israeli authorities intend to encircle the heart of the old Arab city, particularly the sites of worship. The circle of settlements around the old city will then be complete. North and south Palestine will be separated by a wall of Hebrew names consolidated by Israeli sovereignty. As Hebrew names and Israeli authority gain predominance, in the media and elsewhere, the area's original Arab and Islamic identity will be lost.

The process of administrative expansion continues unabated, particularly in Jerusalem. These measures may appear unintentional, if one accepts the idea of Israeli sovereignty over Arab land; in fact, they are part of a racist colonisation policy based on extermination and the denial of history. The Israeli authorities may one day attempt to change the names of the remaining Arab cities falling within Greater Jerusalem, including Ramallah, Bethlehem and other smaller villages. Only an end to Israeli settlement expansion and the return of Palestinian sovereignty over Arab Jerusalem as the capital of independent Palestine will ensure that this does not take place.

The writer is an expert on Palestinian/Israeli affairs and a columnist with Al-Shaab *newspaper.*

'The massacres never ended'

Saleh Abdel-Jawad is director of the Centre for Studying and Documenting the Palestinian Community (CSDPC) at Birzeit University. One of the CSDPC's main projects is to document all aspects of Palestinian life. It has recently published the 20th volume in a series about destroyed Palestinian villages. During the course of research, the CSDPC discovered previously unknown massacres committed by the *Israelis against the* Palestinians since 1948. He spoke to **Amira Howeidy** from Ramallah. Excerpts:

What is the exact number of massacres committed against the Palestinians by the Israelis, and how many of these have actually been documented?
Till this day, those massacres have not been documented or even uncovered in full. But an approximate figure is 30. In 1948, things were not very clear and most of the written references did not reflect the exact nature of what happened on the ground. Therefore, we are in a continuous search for the full facts.

The latest massacre we discovered was at Abu Shousha village. It happened on 14 May 1948, four hours before the announcement of the creation of the State of Israel. It started early in the morning and finished at 9am. At 1.00pm, the Israelis announced the establishment of their state. During the intervening hours, 55 people were killed.

We also rediscovered the massacre of Al-Dawayma, which was mentioned very briefly before. And, we are now working on a village called Thamouqa, where 11 people were killed. We also discovered a massacre in Lifta, in which seven people seated in a café were shot dead by a group from Stern. The massacre triggered panic among the inhabitants of Lifta and made them flee their homes.

There is also Al-Sheikh massacre, in January 1948, when around 66 people were killed; Al-Lidd massacre which took place in a mosque called Dahmash; and the Qitharya massacre which was perpetrated in a bus. These are just some of the things we came across during our research.

Most researchers remain divided over the definition of those massacres, and consequently their aim. Was it genocide, terrorism or just part of a plan to empty Palestine of its people?
I do not think that the Israelis committed genocide similar to what the Americans committed against native Americans, for example. The massacres were carefully planned. They were not the result of irrational behaviour of some army units. The Jews aimed to empty the country. And the massacres were part of a psychological war.

This was done in different forms. They used to send messages to the *makhateer*, or village mayors, warning them of a fate simliar to that of other villages whose inhabitants were massacred.

They also used to place certain equipment on the wings of their planes which caused horrific noise to scare the inhabitants.

The mastermind behind all this, David Ben Gurion [Israel's first prime minister], was very careful not to leave any trace or written proof of his responsibility for the massacres.

In his book published in 1987, Yitzhak Rabin recalled that when Ben Gurion wanted him to start the Al-Lidd massacre, he made a gesture with his hand meaning "get them out" and refused to give him a written command.

How was this psychological war conducted?
I actually call it "sociocide." Its goal was to destroy the social fabric of Palestinian society. It started before 1948 with the formation of an independent Jewish society parallel to the already existing Palestinian one, which the Israelis then proceeded to destroy through war and massacres.

This method could not continue after 1967, not with the information revolution in progress and the international community, including the USSR, watching. So the aim shifted to destroying the Palestinian society by wrecking its economy and culture, by closing its universities and isolating it from the rest of the Arab world.

In addition, the Israelis employed thousands of agents to enhance the mood of fear and insecurity. Any Palestinian became subject to arrest and harassment. This is a unique experience, but no one writes about it. It is as if we are still living in the pre-1948 era.

How many Palestinian villages were totally destroyed?
The number ranges between 390 and 418. This accounts for half the number of all Palestine's villages under the British mandate. Even the inhabitants of those villages could not recognise them afterwards or locate their previous landmarks. This is something the Israelis often boast about. In one of his books, Zionist leader and *master of all massacres, Yigal Allon, said that in the areas where* he and his comrade Yitzhak Rabin served, no Palestinian village was left standing.

What were the most common tactics used to deport the Palestinians from their villages?
All tactics were used. Axes as well as bullets and artillery fire. At that time, the Palestinian community was already insecure, because most of its military leaders were killed in the war, such as Hassan Salama and Abdel-Qader Al-Husseini. The result was that there were only 50 to 60 fighters left to defend each village. The Jewish community and army had developed rapidly. They had already gained experience when they served in the Jewish units in the Allied armies, especially the British, in World War II.

At what stage did Israel stop resorting to massacres as a tactic?
The massacres never stopped and were not limited to 1948. The 1982 massacres in Sabra and Shatila camps in Lebanon were committed by Ariel Sharon to force the Palestinians out of Lebanon and bring right-wing Maronites to power to act as a bridgehead for Israel.

I personally witnessed the slaughter of hundreds of refugees on the Jordanian borders in 1967 by Israeli planes dropping napalm.

The Israeli aggression against the Palestinians never stopped. I documented the cases of 1,500 martyrs who died in the West Bank and discovered that there was absolutely no reason for the Israelis to shoot them. The killings commited during the Intifada were part of an organised plan.

Many people make the mistake of referring, for example, to the 1994 Hebron massacre as the "Goldstein" massacre and as an individual act. But it is important to recall that on the same day, eight Palestinians were shot just because they demonstrated against the massacre. For me, the killing of those eight is even more dramatic than the outrage Goldstein committed.

All the shooting and killing which happened in the Intifada was a massacre. The massacres never ended but simply took different forms.

Do you expect to discover more unknown massacres in your research?
Definitely, but I think they will be of a smaller scale. I don't think we will discover ones as major as Deir Yassin or Al-Sheikh.

Supplement edited by
Hani Shukrallah



Yasser Al-Zayan, shot and killed by Israeli soldiers as he took part in a protest in Gaza in November 1994, is mourned by his parents   *photo: Khaled Al-Zeghary*

Zionism's golden calf

Israel Shahak, professor emeritus at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem and a veteran human rights advocate, spoke to **Omayma Abdel-Latif** of the meaning of Deir Yassin, 49 years later

"The history of modern Zionism has shown a singleness of purpose which is unmatched by any other contemporary movement. So powerful have been the motivations of its leaders and adherents, so deep is their certainty in the rightness of their course and cause, that violations of morality, law and human decency have repeatedly been accepted as unfortunate but unavoidable consequences of the fulfilment of their destiny — reclaiming the Biblical Jewish homeland and establishing the Jewish state of Israel.

"Terrorism and murder have been indispensable tools combined with international intrigues on a grand scale. When Israel, in 1948, massacred hundreds of Palestinians and made *them flee their houses, the whole world stood* by. It did nothing to stop this crime of unparalleled evil that was committed against the Palestinians.

"As the Palestinians commemorate the 49th anniversary of the Deir Yassin massacre, the significance of this massacre was that it heralded the beginning of the condemnation of several million Palestinians to a fate similar to that being used to justify their victimisation. This crime was used to justify another in its image; the dispossession of a people from their ancestral homeland by terror and murder, cloaked in a guise of right and the rule of law when it contained neither.

"The significance [of Deir Yassin] is symbolic because the Arabs have made it a symbol but actually there have been many massacres of which many were far worse than Deir Yassin. But Deir Yassin has been given much importance because the brutality and butchery of the Jews was disclosed by the UN report. A UN delegation visited the site three days after the massacre and published a good report on the tales of horror and murder. And Ben Gurion had to admit the massacre.

"Deir Yassin was just a symbol. But the whole war in 1947-1949 was full of massacres against the Palestinians. And I would refer to one simple fact which reveals the brutality and ruthlessness of the state of Israel. It claims, as a sign of righteousness, that it did not take one Palestinian prisoner of war. Whereas it took Egyptian, Jordanian and Syrian soldiers. Not one Palestinian POW was held by Israel. What does that mean? It simply means that every Palestinian who fell *in the hands of the Israelis* was massacred. There was none of them left to make a prisoner of war. The whole war was a big massacre and Deir Yassin was only symbolic.

"There have been many tens or hundreds of massacres which were worse in brutality than Deir Yassin but they were not talked about. And they are still in oblivion because, for one thing, the Palestinians are not properly recording their history. You cannot find one Palestinian (reference) neither in Arabic nor in English in which all the massacres were recorded. The horror tales of Deir Yassin are being told and retold again, but this is only one of many: A hundred, two hundred perhaps.

"The Israelis resort to massacres simply because the Zionist ideology wanted to remove as many Palestinians as possible from the areas they conquered.

"These very massacres show how the dogma called Zionism operates, which is in part a consequence of allowing its practitioners to use the scurrilous denomination of the German people *as a shield while performing acts as atrocious* on an individual level as any they attribute to their persecutors, including torture as a state-approved tool of inquiry.

"The ideology of the Jewish state is based on this principle: 'a Jew who kills a non-Jew is exempt from human judgment and has not violated the prohibition of murder." The Gush Emunim rabbis have indeed reiterated that Jews who kill Arabs should be free from all punishment.

Rabbi Aviner, Rabbi Zvi Yehudah Kook and Rabbi Ariel, all three of them say Arabs living in Palestine are thieves because since the land was once Jewish, all property to be found on that land 'really' belongs to the Jews.

"When the Irgunists killed and massacred dozens of women, children and men in Deir Yassin and other massacres, Ben Gurion said that it brought shame to the cause the Israelis were struggling for. But killing children and unarmed civilians was part of the theological beliefs of the Israelis.

The ideology of the Jewish state is based on this principle: A Jew who kills a non-Jew is exempt from human judgment and has not violated the prohibition of murder

"Rabbi Aviner once wondered if 'there was a difference between punishing an Arab child and an Arab adult for disturbance of our peace?' The answer, as he put it, was that 'any Gentile, no matter how little, should be punished for any crime he commits.' From this dictum, it is only a short step to slaughtering Arab children. The mass-murder of Palestinians in Deir Yassin is only a con*sequence of what I call Judeo-Nazism.*

"Jews believe and say three times a day that a Jew must be devoted to God and to God alone: 'You will love Yaveh, your God, with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your might.' — (Deuteronomy, VI:5). A small minority *still believe in this. But it seems to me* that the majority of the people have lost their God and replaced it by an idol, just like when they adored the golden calf in the desert so much that they gave all their gold to make a statue to him. The name of their modern idol is: the State of Israel.

"This simply shows that the Deir Yassin massacre and the massacres that followed *until* today are but an essential part of the structure of the state of Israel. Such a state was established on *violence. Worse still*, it was established on techniques of the Zionist movement which denied and still denies the right of anyone but the Jews to the land of Israel.

"It is not a question of violence but of ideology. The Zionist ideology says that the land of *Israel — which not only includes Palestine, but* Jordan and other parts of Arab countries — is only for Jews to live on and benefit from. This is the original theory, and to cite but an example, according to Gush Emunim, 'Jews are not and cannot be a normal people', because 'their eternal uniqueness' is 'the result of the covenant God made with them at Mount Sinai'. Therefore, according to Rabbi Shlomo Aviner, one of their leaders, 'while God requires other normal nations to abide by abstract codes of 'justice and righteousness', such laws do not apply to Jews'.

"But in my view one should not concentrate on the fact that the inhabitants of Deir Yassin were massacred but rather on the fact that the survivors were never allowed to return because this is the embodiment of the Zionistic ideology: that every human being who is not Jewish is not allowed to return.

"The ideology of the state of Israel and the beliefs on which it is founded are extraordinary. If you will begin to count the victims of Bosnia, for example, and the victims in Israel, I do not know where we will end'? So it is the beliefs and the ideology which are unusual. I believe that the fundamental principles are wrong and have to be condemned whether based on violence or non-violence.

"Another example is that 92 per cent of the land of Israel belongs to the state. This land is held for the benefit of the Jews. It is held not for *Palestinians or Arabs, but for Americans*, Russians, Chinese. Any one who is not Jewish cannot rent this land, buy this land, or benefit from this land. This is apartheid. Now, it is completely true that much of this land was taken by violence from Palestinian inhabitants and another part was bought with money. But it does not make a difference. Part of the land was stolen and the other part was bought with money. But the principle of apartheid remained there.

"It is this apartheid concept which governs the *ideology* of the State of Israel, not violence. Apartheid is very strong. There is a great difference between the two. The number of victims — killed or wounded — of violence could be very small. But apartheid involves the millions in Jerusalem and the West Bank who are denied *equal rights. And this is worse than violence.*

"I believe that the present apartheid system is based on the cooperation between Israel and the Palestinian Authority — two gangsters who are living on their share of the spoil. The Palestinian Authority and Arafat signed an agreement *in Oslo on the principle of* apartheid and, therefore, whether the Palestinian Authority takes a bigger or smaller share makes no difference. We will have to have a new beginning which is based on equal rights for every human being in the area of Palestine. And this is not possible given the facts and the *fundamentals of* the Israeli state.

"None of what we, and a growing number of Jewish people of conscience, feel is morally wrong — and in fact blatantly criminal — about Zionist-inspired actions by Israel is offered as an indictment of *anything* except Zionism and its track record of human indecency in the pursuit of a political end.

"The oft-heard argument that anti-Zionism is simply *anti-Semitism in* disguise is a specious one whose inanity is best exhibited in trying to apply it to the scathing condemnations of Zionism.

"Zionism uses a *pattern of human rights* abuses and flaunts international law to further its ends'. The Jews of Israel now routinely accept Zionism's outrageous double-speak to excuse blatant crimes. This will not stop until people understand what is going on and our aim is to assist *in that moral* enlightenment, thereby hastening the day when people everywhere, including Jews and Palestinians, may live in a condition of mutual respect and peace with their neighbours. Brotherly love may have to wait a while longer in a land where grudges are meas*ured in millennia.*"

هكذا من الأصل

هكذا من الأصل

Close up

Salama A. Salama

Green around the gills

In a report titled "Egypt in *the Twenty-First Century*", Dr Kamal El-Ganzouri devoted an entire chapter to the general guidelines which he describes as essential to an overall development effort corresponding to the requirements of our era. Conservation of the environment and the protection of environmental resources, which are basic requirements for sustainable development, are *dealt with as a separate item.*

The report focuses on the need to take the environment into consideration when drawing up economic and production plans. The aim is to ensure that the preservation of the environment becomes an integral part of any project aimed at establishing an industrial plant or a new human settlement.

Once environmental preservation becomes a concrete item on the policy agenda, well-coordinated decisions and integrated policies will result. The dream of escaping the narrow confines of the Nile Valley, *either by* expanding into Sinai (Al-Salam Canal) or by expanding into the Western Desert (the Toshki project) are good examples. Neither project, however, has entailed any thorough research on its environmental impact in terms of pollution or biodiversity. Have the inhabitants of the new settlements been adequately informed on construction methods, rationalisation of water consumption, or the danger to fish and marine life in Al-Bardawil Lake posed by the sewage water carried there by Al-Salam Canal?

Environmental conservation programmes in Sinai seem to be receiving more attention than in other places in the Nile Valley. On each *visit to Sinai over the past* six years, I have noticed that vast progress has been made *in earmarking natural* reserves and applying environmental standards to all tour*istic projects and institutions.* The high level of environmental awareness in Sinai may be explained by the following factors:

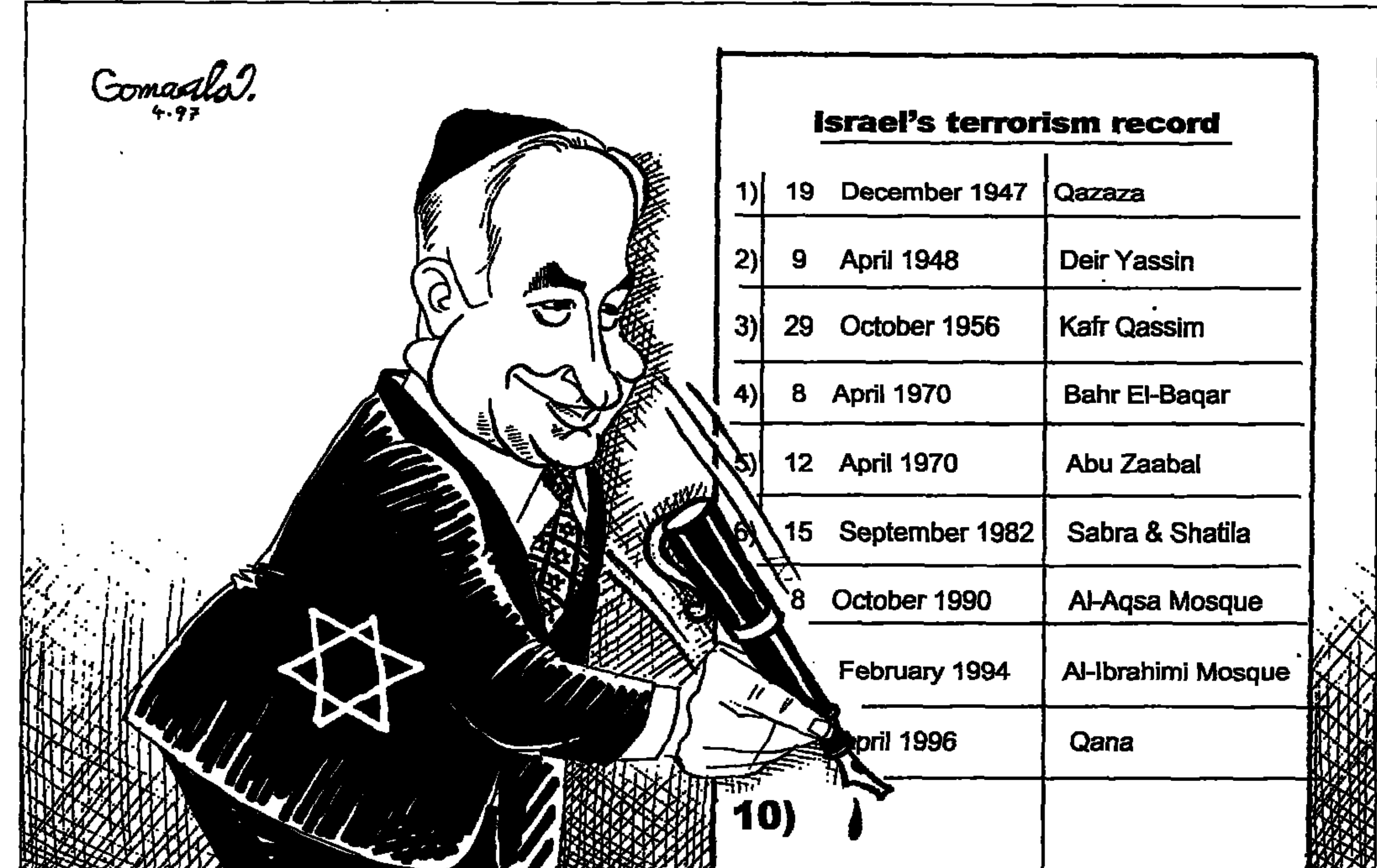
First, it is no doubt easier and more effective to apply environmental programmes in Sinai, where the land is still untouched by pollution caused by overcrowdedness and congestion.

Secondly, tourism, currently the most lucrative economic industry in Sinai, requires the conservation of the desert and marine environments, which are the principal touristic attractions in Sinai.

It is no wonder, therefore, that the Israelis have taken *the initiative to* establish two environmental schools in Sinai. Students at the St Catherine and Sharm El-Sheikh schools are required to spend time observing the wildlife and marine life of Sinai, comprising both flora and fauna. Scientists and researchers use the schools as centres for environmental studies and research. The school in St Catherine is still in operation, and is affiliated to the Suez Canal University, but its student body has diminished *and its activity slowed somewhat.* The school in Sharm El-Sheikh, however, once a *hub of scholarly* and preservation activity, has been totally demolished; today, a magnificent five-star hotel stands in its place. The Suez Canal University has been offered a plot of land to build an environment school, but construction work on the cement edifice overlooking Naama *Bay* in *Sharm* El-Sheikh has been halted due to lack of funds.

*Courses on the environ*ment in the public education system leave much to be desired. Topics about the environment are for classroom study, in isolation from any first-hand experience. Few school or university students know much about Sinai. In fact, expeditions sent by the Television Organisation, the People's Assembly and the Shura Council to Sinai have *proved that their* members are more interested in enjoying their stay in luxurious hotels and walking along the gorgeous beaches than in conserving environmental resources, the pristine beauty of the mountains and valleys of Sinai, and the endangered species of its flora and fauna.

There is an urgent need to step up the interest of the government and of the public in environmental *issues in* Sinai. It is inconceivable that, while we are bracing ourselves *for a true* renaissance in the twenty-first century, we entrust the conservation of our *environment* to any single agency. The task is too colossal.



Soapbox

A clean slate

The current crisis in the peace process mirrors structural distortions which, though plastered over by time, were inherent from the start. They are essentially due to the fundamental incompatibility in the goals of the Arabs and Israelis. With the recently formed Arab front on minimum requirements for the continuation of the peace process, it has become virtually impossible for the process to take up from where it left off before Jebel Abu Ghneim. Any way out of the present impasse would only be a temporary ceasefire. At this junction, the Arabs and Israelis need to admit that the present course is deadlocked, and try to find a new and totally different course of action.

I agree with Netanyahu that a new international peace conference must be convened, although I evidently disagree with him on its goals. I do not suggest another Madrid, but a conference similar to those held to reconcile adversaries after global conflagrations. This has several advantages: Netanyahu can claim to have initiated the conference; Syria could find a suitable framework for the resumption of negotiations; the EU and Japan could guarantee their interests in *the region; the UN could* resume its role in enforcing international law as the principal term of reference in the process; finally, such a conference would provide an ideal framework for Egypt to play a leading role.

The proposal will be staunchly resisted by the US and Israel. A wide-scale diplomatic effort will be needed. Despite enormous obstacles, however, the endeavour is very much worth the try.



This week's Soapbox speaker is professor of political science at Cairo University.

Hassan Nafaa

Deir Yassin recalled

To reduce the Palestinian actuality to nil, to efface the Palestinian people as a people with legitimate rights was the true purpose of the horrors of Deir Yassin, and, writes **Edward Said**, it is a purpose that continues to set the Zionist agenda to this day

My parents, sisters and I left Palestine for the last time during the latter part of December 1947; in addition to the family business in Palestine of which he was a partner, my father was in charge of the Egyptian branch, so in effect when we left Jerusalem for Cairo we were returning to somewhere familiar, to a home, schools, friends, etc. The rest of my extended family was not so lucky. By mid-spring of *1948 everyone* of them on both sides, paternal and maternal — uncles, aunts, cousins — had become refugees scattered throughout the Arab world. *Most went to Jordan*, a few to Lebanon, my paternal aunt and most of her grown children to Egypt, where they joined my father *in the business of which they too were partners.*

I recall quite vividly that though I was twelve at the time, I was neither told much about nor was able fully *to grasp the nature of the catastrophe that had over*taken us as a people; I am not even sure that I thought of us as members of a specific people. Our household *was totally depoliticised, although we came to feel the* difficulties of Palestinian refugees in Egypt as somehow involving us. This was natural enough since I remember *it was quite common to see relatives in* very reduced circumstances, worrying about how they were going to pay the rent, find jobs, and so on. During the *course of 1948, however, it dawned on me imperfectly* and incompletely, I am sure, what a true misfortune had befallen Arab Palestine.

No *small role was played in this growing awareness* of the question of Palestine by the fragmentary reports I heard around our dinner table in Cairo during the spring and summer of *1948* about the *Deir Yassin* massacre, which took place on 9 April 1948. My aunt and her daughter in particular had been in Jerusalem *(about four kilometres away from Deir Yassin) at the* time, but had heard only the desperate and horrified accounts of the ordeal of those 250 men, women and children — innocents all of them — *ruthlessly* murdered in cold blood by "the Jews", as everyone called them. More *than* any single occurrence in my memory *of* that *difficult* period *it was Deir Yassin* that stood out in all its awful, and intentional fearsomeness — the stories of rape, of children with their throats slit, mothers disemboweled, and the like. They gripped the imagination, as they were designed to do, and they impressed a young boy many miles away with the mystery of such bloodthirsty, and seemingly gratuitous violence against Palestinians whose only crime seemed to be that they were there. Yet is was not until almost a decade later that I was able to understand the context and real meaning of what happened at Deir Yassin.

It used to be thought that the massacre was a deliberate but somehow random terrorist incident planned and executed by Menachem Begin's Irgun. What we now know is that according to Israeli historian Benny Morris the "operation" at Deir Yassin was not only abetted and participated in by the Hagganah, but was part of an over-all Zionist plan (Dalet, first written about by Walid Khalidi) to systematically empty Palestine of its Arab population. Deir Yassin, because of the sheer horror of its murderousness had, says Morris in his book *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem, 1947-1949*, "the most lasting effect of any single event of the war in precipitating the flight of Arab villagers from Palestine" (p. 113).

The fact of course is that it was not just "Arab villagers" who left for that and similar reasons, but two-*thirds of the entire Palestinian population*, about 800,000 people. Recent extremely important work by the Palestinian-Israeli scholar Nur Masalha on the *concept of "transfer" in Zionist thought shows how* persistently the Zionists imagined, planned for, and implemented programmes to rid their "promised land" of the native people. *His first book*, which treats Zionist ideology from 1882 to 1948, is *Expulsion of the Palestinians*; his second, and only just published, is a *terrifyingly graphic* account of the period between 1949 and 1996: *A Land Without a People: Israel, Transfer and the Palestinians, 1949-96.*

The material he presents in his second volume is even more compelling since not only is it based mainly on Zionist sources, but it shows how deeply, how thoroughly and how *determinedly* Israeli politicians, military men, and intellectuals continued well after 1948 to pursue the same policy of trying to get rid of the Palestinians, *either* by actual transfer, by massacre (as in Kafr Qassim), or by forcing submission on them as a whole. The entire idea has always therefore been to reduce the Palestinian actuality *to nil, to ef*face Palestinians as a people with legitimate rights, to render them alien in their own land. And indeed Israel has so far succeeded in its own mind. The Oslo peace process, the settlements, the arrogant defiance of Netanyahu: these all derive in a straight line from events like Deir Yassin and the idea that made Deir Yassin into the massacre it was.

Yet the question remains: why has Deir Yassin mostly been forgotten, and why has 1948 been removed from the peace agenda by Palestinian leaders and intellectuals? After all we are dealing with Israeli Jews who constantly, and justly, remind the world of the evils of anti-semitism, the Holocaust, and of the reparations thereby made necessary. In his book *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History*, the Haitian historian Michel-Rolph Trouillot discusses *how in Western accounts of the Haitian* revolution of 1798 the Westerners always seem finally destined to win, the Haitians to lose; in addition, most *accounts of that period simply ignore what happened* in Haiti. He refers to "the silencing of the Haitian revolution," which he says happens because the narrative *of Western global domination makes the defeat of na*tive people seem inevitable, unless there is an attempt by native peoples to retell the history of Western dom*ination and thus provoke "a fundamental rewriting of* world history."

As Arabs and Palestinians we are very far from that stage. Our history *is written by outsiders, and* we have conceded the battle in advance. Our leaders negotiate as if from a *tabula rasa*. The agenda is America's and *Israel's. And we continue to concede, and concede* more, and concede again, not only in the present, but also in the past and in the future. Collective memory *is a people's heritage, but also its energy: it does not* merely sit there inertly, but *it* must be activated as part of a people's identity and sense of its own prerogative. To recall Deir Yassin is not just to dwell on past disasters, but to understand who we are and where we are going. Without it we are simply lost, as indeed it *seems we really are.*

The horns of this dilemma

Who will cry uncle first? wonders **Azmi Bishara**. *The answer is no enigma*

The current crisis which has befallen the Israeli-Palestinian peace process does not resemble any of *its predecessors. In the recent past, crises revolved* around details: the jurisdiction of the Palestinian Authority, the extent of withdrawal from Hebron, the re*lease of women prisoners, etc. Compromise* solutions were reached either with respect to these details themselves, or through concessions being made vis-à-vis *other similar details.*

The current crisis, however, involves the basic concept of the peace process, and the distinction between interim arrangements and the permanent settlement. In return for partial concessions, Israel is demanding that the Palestinians make concessions on final status issues. This is the significance of Jebel Abu Ghneim and Netanyahu's determination, declared after his meeting with Clinton, to proceed with settlement expansion in the West Bank. Recently, he announced that certain settlements would be expanded by the addition of 825 housing units. That was the Israeli response to Arab, Palestinian and international opposition to the construction of a Jewish enclave in Jebel Abu Ghneim. Ironically perhaps, everything in our contemporary world is now subject to specialisation! While Israelis specialise in constructing settlements, the Palestinians' specialty is to "combat terrorism".

The Israeli right-wing religious coalition is no longer capable of implementing the commitments made by Rabin and Peres, independently from a mutual agreement regarding the final solution. According to the ruling Likud coalition, "Israeli concessions" do not preclude the Palestinian side from submitting the complete agenda of their demands for the permanent solution: withdrawal to the June 1967 borders, a Palestinian state with Jerusalem as its cap*ital*, the refugees, and *settlements. If no agreement is* reached, the "Israeli concessions" regarding the phased solution will have vanished into thin air.

The bottom *line is that the new Israeli stance aims* at exchanging phased concessions for Palestinian concessions on the permanent issues. This, again, is the significance of *Jebel Abu Ghneim. The construc*tion of new settlements and the expansion of existing pockets of Jewish settlers are issues that cannot be postponed to the final *stage. They must be accepted* by the Palestinians, now. As of today, it must be made quite clear to the Palestinians that no settlements will be dismantled within the framework of the final status negotiations.

Netanyahu believes that he can obtain Labour's approval of the refusals set out in the Beilin-Eitan *plan for final status*, as the foundation for a national unity government which will conduct the final-status negotiations: no *to* the division of Jerusalem, nor to *placing it under any sovereignty* other than Israel's; no to the dismantling of the settlements; no to a Palestinian state; no withdrawal to the 1967 borders. In this case, the Palestinians will not be negotiating with the Likud government, but with all of Israeli society. At the same time, the participation of the Labour Party in such a national unity government would neutralise the pressure of international public opinion, which will regard the newly formed coalition as a more moderate government.

Intensified, swift negotiations similar to those held in Camp David, and held under the umbrella of the "no's" of the Israeli national consensus, will ultimately concern the extent of the PNA's jurisdiction, and the scale of Israeli withdrawals from Palestinian territories. Only after a final status agreement is reached on the PNA's competence and territorial jurisdiction will Israel begin implementing, without delay, its pending commitments under Oslo II, which will be part and parcel of the final status agreement.

Pressure is being exerted on the PNA to accept this new concept of the peace process — one that does not deviate from the Oslo agreement, but is contrary to its basic principles. Linking the permanent and phased solutions was a Palestinian demand before Oslo, but it has become an Israeli claim now that Israel's consummate ability to dictate terms *within the Oslo* framework *has become evident.* Meanwhile, Israeli pressure takes the form of using the PNA's alleged unwillingness to seriously com*bat terrorism as a pretext for disrupting the imple*mentation of the Oslo II commitments, and for suspending negotiations on phased issues such as *redeployment*, *prisoners*, *safe passage*, the *airport*, seaport, and others.

Indeed, Israeli pressure on the PNA consists of re*fusing even to negotiate on implementing these in*terim commitments, which include the mere freedom of movement of the PNA's ministers. *Whenever closure is imposed on Palestinian self*-rule territories, free passage permits issued to VIPs are immediately cancelled. Only the permits of so-*called VIP-1* category officials remain in force. Even "very important persons" have been classified by the Israelis into less and more important categories. Israeli pressure here is aimed directly at Palestinian Authority officials. During the last two years, these officials, naturally, have developed a number of interests closely linked to the progress of the peace process, involving security and economic cooperation, Israeli agencies, export-import rights, and even free passage.

The official Palestinian stance vacillates between two positions. One rejects Israeli dictates concerning Jebel Abu Ghneim, prompted by the realisation that acceptance of Israeli conditions concerning the settlements would mean an inevitable dilemma regarding the permanent solution. This would compel the Palestinian leadership to renounce its national objectives, and thereby renounce its role of national leadership. But while the PNA's rejection of Israeli settlement policies is an assertion of a national position, the policies it pursues within the Palestinian territories are hardly creating appropriate conditions for maintaining resolve and consistency on the basis of this position. On the contrary, the PNA gives the impression that the Palestinian leadership is torn between Jebel Abu Ghneim, on one hand, and the airport on the other; and the freedom of movement of PNA VIPs versus that of the Palestinian population in the territories as a whole.

For the national position expressed by Arafat in the recent meetings of the Arab League Council and the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries to win credibility both at home and abroad, it must be backed by an appropriate domestic, economic and *social policy* and a *commitment to the rule of law.* Such a policy must be designed with a view to mobilising the full capabilities of the Palestinian people *in the confrontation against the Israeli position,* which is premised on Israel's full confidence in its ability to exert unlimited pressure on the Palestinians. *Unless this national commitment to sov*ereignty, independence and an Arab Jerusalem is established upon a solid foundation of determination, *the Palestinian leadership will be unable to maintain* it and will be compelled to resume the negotiations — indeed, to seek their resumption.

*The proponents of this national stance have, fur*thermore, recently awakened to the fact that the US will not bring any pressure to bear on Israel, except as regards the formation of a national coalition government with the Labour Party. If this occurs, even international sympathy for the Palestinians will vanish.

The second official Palestinian position is held by those who have definitively linked their destiny to the Israeli-Palestinian negotiations and are, in fact, the product of these negotiations. They are calling for the resumption of negotiations after acknowledging defeat in Jebel Abu Ghneim, in order to obtain the most privileges possible for the Palestinian governing elite. This group within the Palestinian leadership is negotiating, in clear and explicit terms, the interests of ruling Palestinians, leaving aside the Palestinian problem and the people's interests. Their mentality is compatible with the new Israeli understanding of peace. The only issue to be negotiated is that concerning the jurisdiction and competencies of the Palestinian Authority.

While Palestinian youths are called upon to oppose Israeli policies in the streets, there is as yet no clear Palestinian solution to the dilemma currently besetting the negotiations, a dilemma which Israel has striven to create. Assuming that a unified Palestinian stance were to coalesce, the conditions for internal resistance are absent. With the exception of Arafat's activity on the international level, neither Palestinian nor international campaigns are being pursued to raise European or American public awareness, which now shows a certain amount of sympathy towards the Palestinians, and aversion to Netanyahu.

Even the Europeans, recognising that the Palestinian *stance lacks* firm determination and *clarity*, have attempted, through the EU envoy to the region, to influence the Palestinian leadership to forego the issue of Jebel Abu *Ghneim and* take the *initiative in* combating terrorism, while the Israelis are to freeze the construction of settlements — after Jebel Abu Ghneim.

The Israeli peace movement is also waiting for a Palestinian capitulation, or for the formation of a national coalition government. Pending either alternative, the peace movement seems to have chosen silence. Meanwhile, the Arab world issues well-intentioned statements through their foreign ministers, but makes no move on the Arab, European, or American fronts. The dilemma masters the situation. Who will cry uncle first? The side with the least domestic and international elements to back its resolve.

The writer is a Palestinian-Israeli member of the Knesset.



A RELIGIOUS ODYSSEY: *Hajj* **paintings traditionally celebrate the completion of the great pilgrimage, and can be found on the walls of houses throughout Egypt, in village, town and city. Ann Parker, an American photographer, has spent ten years taking photographs of these images. The result of this work will be on show at the Sony Gallery at the American University in Cairo, until 8 May.** *(see pp. 12 & 13)*

Castles in the air

Nehad Selaiha remembers Noaman Ashour and applauds a recent AUC revival of *Burg Al-Madabigh* (Tannery Tower) at the Wallace

Noaman Ashour, an ardent socialist, who spent a lifetime guarding against false promises

In North's *Plutarch* (1676) we read about people who "built castles in the air and thought to do great wonders"; and nearly two centuries later we find Bishop Hall warning, in his *Contemplation*: "Ye great men, spend not all your time in building castles in the air or houses on the sand." Did Noaman Ashour (the father of socialist realism in Egyptian drama, as he is often dubbed) have a similar warning in mind when he wrote "Tannery Tower" in 1974? As an ardent and committed socialist (which he remained until his death in 1986), Ashour must have watched with trepidation and growing despair the vast social upheaval brought about by the new economic policies launched by Sadat in the wake of the October War, particularly the so-called 'open door' policy. It was a change that flaunted its existence quite flagrantly not only in rocketing prices, the diminishing value of the pound, the feverish exodus to the oil-rich Arab states and the inundation of the market with imported consumer goods (the possession of which soon became a status symbol), but in the physical appearance of the streets, shops and buildings. Ugly housing towers and massive utilitarian buildings were sprouting everywhere, rapidly turning the city into a jungle of cement. I remember the shock I experienced in 1975 when, after years of absence, I wandered through Cairo, looking for my old haunts and favourite walks and meeting only architectural horrors.

Ashour, had used the housing block as a metaphor for capitalist society in one of his earliest, and perhaps most popular, plays, *El-Nas Elli Taht* (The People Downstairs), and ended this optimistic play, written in the flush of revolutionary aspirations after Nasser's accession to power in 1954, with the younger generation moving out of the basement to seek a new home in Masr El-Gididah, or 'new Egypt', which is what Heliopolis is called in Arabic. The pun at once referred to a factual place, in accordance with the realism of the play, and pointed clearly to Ashour's dream of a new, classless society.

The 1967 defeat knocked the bottom out of the dream, and by 1974 the dream had evaporated or, at best, become a sour memory or a cynical joke. The young men who had fought the 1973 War and thought that they had bought with their 'victory' the promise of a better future were soon disillusioned; the new social reality, with its ethic of quick and easy gain and living by one's wits, alienated and marginalised most of them, hardly allowing them a foothold. Graft and corruption were rampant and became the order of the day. It was a period which witnessed the mushrooming of night-clubs along Al-Haram Street, transforming it into something of an unofficial red-light district, an unprecedented influx of oil-rich Arab tourists, the rise of the worst type of commercial theatre and the migration of serious theatre to the provinces, the persecution of the left and the rise of religious fundamentalism, the fast sliding of the professional middle classes down the economic ladder and the spread of the veil among the women of those classes, both as a protest and an economic necessity. Evacuating one's home during the summer to let it furnished to some rich Arab became a familiar and widespread phenomenon; another was the marrying of under-age girls to rich old Arabs against what looked to their poor and needy families as vast sums of money.

The Egyptian cinema has since documented many of the ills of that period, particularly in the films that were once grouped under the rubric 'the new wave'. In the theatre, however, Ashour was, as far as I know, the first to tackle them in a full-length play. Written in the heat of the moment, "Tannery Tower" was obviously intended by Ashour as a scathing social satire on the mores and manners of the new class of business sharks and nouveaux riches which had suddenly and illegitimately risen to power. The family of Salama, a former modest trader in herbs and spices who suddenly shoots to wealth and power when he stumbles upon a treasure of hide in the vicinity of Cairo's abattoir where he lives, and subsequently moves out to a fashionable quarter of the city where he invests the fortune he makes out of the sale of the hide in a housing tower, is presented as a microcosm, a miniature portrait of the new social reality in Egypt at the time. Salama himself is morally and ideologically muddled, unwittingly torn between two worlds and two value systems. Religious and pious in a facile, conventional sort of way, he seeks to pacify his conscience and curry favour with God by building a mosque at the bottom of the tower and going on a pilgrimage to Mecca. Meanwhile, the rapacious, avaricious woman (Dawlat) he has been secretly married to for 15 years (a relationship that mixes business with pleasure) is running the eight flats he gave her as a reward for her services as furnished pleasure dens for Arab tourists. The younger generation of the family is more sharply divided into two conflicting groups: on the one hand, the eldest son Isam, his sister Fifi and, to a lesser degree, her husband (and cousin) Hanafi, are worshippers of Mammon and ardent believers in the new laissez-faire ideology; on the other, the youngest son, Hisham, who comes back from the '73 War in a wheelchair, maimed and traumatised, and his wife (and cousin) Nadia, who tried to commit suicide more than once during his absence, embody Ashour's own bitter disillusionment and fierce anger, occasionally voicing his urgent warning not to build castles in the air or houses on the sand. The working classes are represented in the play by a sharp, crafty house-painter, and the family's shrewd, witty, self-educated and outspoken servant, Mubarak. The two provide much of the humour of the play and a running caustic commentary on what is taking place. Indeed, at times, the whole play seems to be projected from Mubarak's point of view, and since the character is an obvious theatrical convention, a combination of the wise Shakespearean fool, the wily servant of Roman comody and the Arlecine of the *commedia dell 'arte*, his view of the action endows it with a definite and pronounced theatrical dimension.

Here, as in the best of his dramas, Ashour reaches beyond the boundaries of realism to draw upon the long-established conventions of popular comedy, and harnesses parody, burlesque, and, occasionally even slapstick farce, as well as verbal punning and repartee. Though nurtured on Chekhov, Gorky and Shaw, he remained always a faithful student of Naguib El-Rihani, and managed to put across his ideas and serious messages in a kind of dialogue that strikes one as very realistic and lifelike, but is in fact intricately crafted to work on more than one level. Through the scintillating wit of the verbal exchanges and the hilarious parodying of the commercial jargon and business language of the day, Ashour gradually builds the tower into a metaphor for a muddled, schizophrenic, self-destructive society, doomed because it lacks a solid, healthy base in reality — a society that is no more than a castle in the air. Indeed, the word 'air' (*el-hawa*), crops up quite frequently in the dialogue in connection with the tower and is ironically handled to suggest a double meaning. The irony becomes quite pronounced in Act II when Salama's grasping wife, Dawlat, standing in the roof-garden of his penthouse at the top of the tower, staunchly declares: "We are up, high up in the air, and the whole of Egypt is at our feet"; and reaches its climax at the end of the play when the tower begins to shake and quake, suggesting its imminent collapse. How many housing towers built in the seventies have since collapsed? The number proves Ashour's farsightedness and validates his warning even after all these years.

That "Tannery Tower" was performed only once in the seventies, was received with hostility in the press, then, subsequently, unofficially banned, is, perhaps, not surprising. That it should have remained neglected and almost forgotten throughout the eighties and until quite recently, is a mystery and a great pity. It needed someone like Mahmoud El-Lozy — a rebellious intellectual with definite views on censorship and an excellent actor and sensitive director — to bring it to life again.

As an enthusiastic admirer of Ashour, El-Lozy (who did one of Ashour's plays, "Give Us Back Our Money", into English a few years ago) stuck faithfully to the text of "Tannery Tower", removing only (and quite wisely) some embarrassingly sentimental bits here and there, as well as Ashour's pointed, but quite out of place, attack on the techniques of Brecht's epic theatre, popular at the time. Realising that the play did not so much depend on a developing plot as on the gradual unfolding of a metaphor, he kept the three-act formula with two five minute intervals during which the set was changed in full view of the audience. This was a pleasure in itself and quite in line with the palpably theatrical character of Ashour's handling of realism in this piece. The acting too partook of that exciting mixture of realism and broad theatricality, and the work was firmly located in its immediate historical context through the use of slides showing familiar postcard scenes of Cairo and newspaper headlines and stories documenting the significant events of the period. Inji Taha's costumes, too, were typical of the period in which the play is set, and so were Mohamed Hamed Ali's intelligent and unobtrusive sets which followed closely Ashour's stage directions.

But El-Lozy's most remarkable achievement in this production was his choice, casting and handling of his performers. They are all still students, studying various subjects, with only Ahmed Shams (Salama), Riham Ismat (Fifi), and Rami Imam (Mubarak) specialising in theatre: but their competence, technical proficiency, discipline and sense of rhythm were such as to put many a professional performer in the Egyptian theatre to shame. Indeed, Lamia Kamel was stunning as Dawlat, and so was Riham Ismat as Fifi. Both acted with the confidence, finesse, and sure-handedness that performers only acquire after years of experience. Impressive performances, too, were given by Mahmoud Rammah as the house-painter, Mahmoud Nofal as Isam and Ahmed Shams as Salama, while Tamer El-Mahdi, Mohamed Yusri and Yasmeen Fahmi did their best with parts that were originally written without much flair. As for Rami Imam (Adel Imam's son, as I was later told), he seems to have inherited his father's comic prowess and charismatic theatrical presence.

When I complimented El-Lozy on his choice of performers and asked him how many of them planned to take up acting professionally, I was shocked to hear him say that the Actors Union would never consent to give them a license to practice professionally if they applied. No wonder the professional theatre is so anaemic where acting talent is concerned. It seems that nowadays one has to look for real theatre in such pockets as the Wallace and Al-Hanager, away from the Actors Union and the mainstream professional theatre.

Listings

EXHIBITIONS

Ute Schönemann (Paintings)
Goethe Institute, 5 El-Bustan St. Downtown. Tel 575 9877. Daily exc Sat & Sun, 8am-7pm; Fri 8am-12pm. Until 25 April.
Works under the title Faces of The Desert.

The Water of The Desert (Photographs)
Al-Ahram Gallery, Al-Ahram Bldg. El-Galaa St. Boulaq. Tel 5786300. Daily 9am-10pm. Until 27 April.

Vissela Farid (Paintings)
Salama Gallery, 36/A Ahmed Orabi St, Mohandessin. Tel 346 3241. Daily exc Fri, 10am-2.30pm & 5pm-9pm. Until 27 April.

A Leap Into The Past: The Bracciano Lake 8000 Years Ago
Italian Cultural Institute, 3 El-Sheikh El-Marsafi St, Zamalek. Tel 340 8791. Daily exc Sat & Sun, 9am-2pm & 5pm-9pm. Until 28 April.
Documents of underwater archaeological research in Italy.

Xavier Puigmarti (Paintings)
Mashrabiya Gallery, 8 Champollion St. Downtown. Tel 778 623. Daily exc Fri, 11am-8pm. Until 30 April.

Jean Crotti (Paintings)
Cairo-Berlin Gallery, 17 Youssef El-Guindi St. Bab El-Louk. Tel 393 1764. Daily exc Sun, 12pm-8pm. Until 3 May.
New works under the title *Pas Sages Comme Les Images.*

Domestic Architecture in Islamic Egypt
Rare Books and Special Collections Library, AUC, corner of El-Sheikh Rihan and Mansour Sts. Tel 357 5436. Sun-Wed 8.30am-7pm, Thur 8.30am-5pm & Sat 12pm-5pm. Until 5 May.

Hussein Shariffe (Paintings)
Espace Gallery, 1 El-Sherifein St. Downtown. Tel 393 1699. Daily 10am-2pm & 6pm-9pm; Fri 2pm-9pm. 22 April-8 May.
New works under the title Innerspace.

Ann Parker
Sony Gallery, Main Campus, AUC, El-Sheikh Rihan St. Tel 357 5424. Daily exc Fri & Sat, 9am-12pm & 6pm-9pm. Until 8 May.
These 34 colour photographs record the palette of mostly self-taught artists exemplifying the folk art of the Great Pilgrimage. Included are representations of the *Ka'ba*, images of transporation, calligraphic inscriptions and pastoral renderings of Islamic worship.

Publications of the Greek Community in Egypt From 1853-1983
Foundation for Hellenic Culture, 18 Sidi El-Metwalli St, El-Attarin, Alexandria. Tel (03) 482 1598. Until 10 May.

Moustafa Ahmed (Paintings) & Fatma Refaat (Paintings)
Extra Gallery, 3 El-Nessim St, corner of Montaza St. Zamalek. Tel 340 6293. Daily exc Sun, 10.30am-2pm & 5pm-8pm. 23 April-10 May.

Maquettes
French Cultural Centre, Mounira annex, 1 Madraset El-Hoqouq El-Ferensiya St, Mounira. Tel 354 7679. Daily exc Fri & Sat. 9am-2pm & 6pm-9pm. 22 April-5 June.
Research works by the students of the Architecture School of Nancy, currently in Cairo, on Bab Nasr.

The Museum of Mr and Mrs Mohamed Mahmoud Khalil
1 Kafour El-Akhshid St, Dokki. Tel 336 2376. Daily exc Mon, 10am-6pm.
Egypt's largest collection of nineteenth century European art, amassed by the late Mahmoud Khalil and his wife, includes works by Courbet, Van Gogh, Gauguin, and Rodin and a host of impressionist works, housed in the villa once belonging to the Khalils and converted into a museum with little, if any, expense spared. There are also a number of excellent orientalist works.

Fatma Refaat

Egyptian Museum
Tahrir Sq, Downtown. Tel 575 4319. Daily exc Fri, 8am-5pm; Fri 9am-11.15am & 1pm-3pm.
The world's largest collection of Pharaonic and Ptolemaic treasures, including massive granite statues and the smallest household objects used by the Ancient Egyptians, along with, of course, the controversial mummies room. A perennial must.

Coptic Museum
Mar Girgis, Old Cairo. Tel 362 8766. Daily exc Fri, 9am-4pm; Fri 9am-11am & 1pm-3pm.
Founded in 1910, the museum houses a distinguished collection of Coptic art and artefacts, including textiles, manuscripts, icons and architectural features in a purpose built structure in the heart of the Coptic city.

Islamic Museum
Port Said St, Ahmed Maher St, Bab El-Khalq. Tel 390 9930/390 1520. Daily exc Fri, 9am-4pm; Fri 9am-11.30am & 2pm-4pm.
A vast collection of Islamic arts and crafts including *mashrabiya*, lustreware ceramics, textiles, woodwork, coins and manuscripts drawn from Egypt's Fatimid, Ayyubid and Mameluke periods and from other countries in the Islamic world.

Museum of Modern Egyptian Art
Opera House Grounds, Gezira. Tel 340 6861. Daily exc Mon, 10am-1pm & 5pm-9pm.
A permanent display of paintings and sculpture charting the modern art movement in Egypt from its earliest pioneers to latest practitioners. A state of the art museum housing the contemporary art of the state.

Mohamed Nagui Museum
Château Pyramids, 9 Mahmoud Al-Guindi St. Giza.
A museum devoted to the paintings of Mohamed Nagui (1888-1956), the Alexandrian aristocrat who is considered one of the pioneers of the modern Egyptian art movement.

Mahmoud Mukhtar Museum
Tahrir St, Gezira. Daily exc Sun and Mon, 9am-1.30pm.
A permanent collection of works by the sculptor Mahmoud Mukhtar (d. 1934), whose granite monument to Saad Zaghloul stands near Qasr El-Nil Bridge, and whose Egypt Awakening became, somewhat belatedly, an icon of post revolutionary Egypt.

FILMS

Italian Films
Italian Cultural Centre, 3 El-Sheikh El-Marsafi St. Zamalek. Tel 340 8791.
17 April, 7pm: **Ludwig** (p.II), directed by L. Visconti (1973).
20 April, 7pm: **La Strada**, directed by Fellini (1954).

Sabine
French Cultural Centre, Mounira annex, 1 Madraset El-Hoqouq El-Ferensiya St, Mounira. Tel 354 7679. 23 April, 7pm.
Directed by Philippe Faucon (1992), starring Catherine Klein and Marc Sapora.

Commercial cinemas change their programmes every Monday. The information provided is valid through to Sunday after which it is wise to check with the cinemas. Arabic films are seldom subtitled. For information, contact the venue.

Samaka Wa Arba' Qoroush (A Fish and Four Sharks)
Rivoli II, 26 July St, Downtown. Tel 575 5053. Daily 1pm, 3.30pm, 6.30pm 8pm & 10pm. El-Horreya I, El-Horreya Mall, Roxy, Heliopolis. Tel 452 9980. Daily 1pm, 6pm & 9pm. Ramsis Hilton I, Corniche El-Nil St. Tel 574 7436. Daily 10.30am, 1.30pm, 3.30pm, 6.30pm, 9.30pm & midnight. Tiba I, Nasr City. Tel 262 9407. Daily 10.30am, 3.30pm, 6.30pm & 9.30pm. El-Haram, El-Haram St, Giza. Tel 385 8358. Daily 10am, 1pm, 3pm, 6pm & 9pm.

Emra'a Wa Khamas Regal (A Woman and Five Men)
Rivoli I, 26 July St, Downtown. Tel 575 5053. Daily 1pm, 3.30pm, 6.30pm & 9.30pm. Sphinx, Sphinx Sq, Mohandessin. Tel 346 4017. Daily 8pm. Metro, 35 Talaat Harb St, Downtown. Tel 393 3897. Daily 10am, 1pm, 3pm, 6pm & 9pm. Tahrir, 112 Tahrir St, Dokki. Tel 335 4726. Daily 1pm, 3pm, 6pm & 9pm.

Bekhit Wa Adila II (Bekhit and Adila II)
Roxy, Roxy Sq, Heliopolis. Tel 258 0344. Daily 10am, 3pm, 6pm & 9pm. Tiba II, Nasr City. Tel 262 9407. Daily 10.30am, 3.30pm, 6.30pm & 9.30pm. Cosmos I, 12 Emadeddin St, Downtown. Tel 779 537. Daily 10am, 1pm, 3pm, 6pm & 9pm. Diana Palace, 17 El-Alfi St, Emadeddin, Downtown. Tel 924 727. Daily 10am, 1pm, 3pm, 6pm & 9pm.

Hallaq Housh
Cosmos II, 12 Emadeddin St, Downtown. Tel 779 537. Daily 10am, 1pm, 3pm, 6pm & 9pm. Lido, 23 Emadeddin St, Downtown. Tel 934 284. Daily 10am, 1pm, 3pm, 6pm & 9pm.

Imra'a Fawq El-Qemma (A Woman at the Top)
Miami, 38 Talaat Harb St, Downtown. Tel 574 5656. Daily noon, 3.30pm, 5.30pm & 8.30pm.

Ehtares Men El-Khott (Beware the Khott)
New Odeon I, 4 Abdel-Hamid Said St, Downtown. Tel 575 8797. Daily 10.30am, 2.30pm, 5.30pm & 8.30pm.

Star Wars
Cairo Sheraton, El-Galaa St, Giza. Tel 360 6081. Daily 10.30am, 1pm, 3pm, 6pm, 9pm & midnight. Normandy, 31 El-Ahram St, Heliopolis. Tel 258 0254. Daily 12.30pm, 3.30pm, 6.30pm & 9.30pm. Radio, 24 Talaat Harb St, Downtown. Tel 575 6562. Daily 10am, 1pm, 3pm, 6pm & 9pm.

The Phantom
Ramsis Hilton II, Corniche El-Nil St. Tel 574 7436. Daily 10.30am, 1.30pm, 3.30pm, 6.30pm, 9.30pm & midnight. El-Horreya II, El-Horreya Mall, Roxy, Heliopolis. Tel 452 9980. Daily 1pm, 3pm, 6pm, & 9pm.

Satan's Treasure
New Odeon II, 4 Abdel-Hamid Said St, Downtown. Tel 575 8797. Daily 10.30am, 2.30pm, 5.30pm & 8.30pm.

Escape from L.A.
El-Salam, 65 Abdel-Hamid Badawi St, Heliopolis. Tel 293 1072. Daily 3.30pm, 6.30pm & 9.30pm.

The Glimmer Man
Karim II, 15 Emadeddin St, Downtown. Tel 924 830. Daily 10am, 1pm, 3pm, 6pm & 9pm.

Earth Girls Are Easy
Karim I, as above. Daily 10am, 1pm, 3pm, 6pm & 9pm.

Surf Ninja
MGM, Kolleyat El-Nasr Sq, Maadi. Tel 352 3066. Daily 10am, 1pm, 3pm, 6pm & 9pm.

Stung Cold
New Odeon III, 4 Abdel-Hamid Said St, Downtown. Tel 575 8797. Daily 10.30am, 2.30pm, 5.30pm & 8.30pm.

MUSIC

National Arabic Music Ensemble
Main Hall, Opera House, Gezira. Tel 341 0598. 17 April, 8pm.
Conducted by Selim Sahab.

Talents Symphony Orchestra
Small Hall, Opera House, as above. 18 April, 8pm.

The Melodies Ensemble
Gomhouriya Theatre, Gomhouriya St. Tel 391 9956. 19 April, 9pm.

The Egyptian Musical Youth
Small Hall, Opera House, as above. 19 April, 8pm.

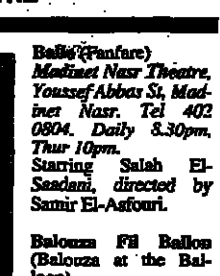
Violin Recital
Small Hall, Opera House, as above. 20 April, 8pm.
Mahmoud Osman performs.

Soloists of The Cairo Symphony Orchestra
Small Hall, Opera House, as above. 22 April, 8pm.
Performing composition by Brahms.

Barber of Seville
Main Hall, Opera House, as above. 23 April, 8pm.
Performed by the Cairo Opera Company and the Cairo Opera Orchestra; conducted by Ivan Filev.

Chamber Soloists of the Frankfurt Opera
Ewart Hall, Main Campus, AUC, El-Sheikh Rihan St. Tel 357 6373. 23 April, 8pm.
Basma Abdel-Rehim (violin), Christine Reisbach (violin) Ludwig Hampe (viola), Kamel Salaheddin (cello) and Thomas Parenthaler (horn) perform selections from works by Mozart, Schubert, Copland and Creston.

THEATRE



Balle (Fanfare)
Madinet Nasr Theatre, Youssef Abbas St, Madinet Nasr. Tel 402 0804. Daily 8.30pm, Thur 10pm.
Starring Salah El-Saadani, directed by Samir El-Asfouri.

Balouza Fil Ballon (Balouza at the Balloon)
Balloon Theatre, Corniche El-Nil, Agouza. Tel 347 1718. Daily 9pm.

Messa' El-Kheir Ya Masr (Good Evening Egypt)
Mohamed Farid Theatre, Emadeddin St. Tel 770 603. Daily 9pm.

Wada'an Ya Bakawat (Farewell, Sirs)
George Abiad Hall, Ezbekiya Theatre, Ataba Sq. Tel 591 1267. Daily 9pm.

LECTURES

Classical Architecture in Roman Egypt
British Council, 192 El-Nil St, Agouza. Tel 301 0319. 21 April, 7pm.
Lecture by Dr Donald Bailey, from the Department of Greek and Roman Antiquities, the British Museum.

Privatisation du Secteur Textile en Egypte: de la Segmentarisation à la Globalisation ?
CEDEJ, 14 Gam'eyet El-Nisr St. Mohandessin. 22 April, 5pm.
Lecture by Dr Françoise Clément, CEDEJ.

All information correct at time of going to press. However, it remains wise to check with venues first, since programmes, dates and times are subject to change at very short notice.

Please telephone or send information to Listings, *Al-Ahram Weekly*, Galaa St, Cairo. Tel 5786064, Fax 5786089/833.

Compiled by **Injy El-Kashef**

Around the galleries



Jean Crotti

ARCHITECTURE receives its fair share of attention in several exhibitions, not least the show Homes and Places at **Khan El-Maghraby Gallery**, which includes works by **George Bahgory** and **Afif Sharfawi** inspired by their experiences of Sanaa and Wahran respectively.

At the **Goethe Institute**, which is showing recent works by **Ute Schonemann** under the title Faces of the Desert there is a similar attempt to capture the elusive spirit of place, though in this case the emphasis is on an inhospitable natural environment and its inhabitants, while at **Cairo Berlin** Swiss artist **Jean Crotti** interprets his experiences of Cairo in a series of pictograms, emotional ciphers that contain clues to his understanding of the city.

Reviewed by **Nagwa El-Ashri**

هكذا من الأصل

هكذا من الأصل

Dance to the music of time: **David Blake** encounters the enigmatic ballerina Magda Saleh before rushing off to see the Bolshoi

Swanning around Byzantium

She sits before the onlooker. She is famous and more. Legend might cling to her. She is Magda Saleh, ballerina.

Voice of Saleh: "Ballerina — the word's OK for the ratings. Ballerinas hit people, especially their partners. They are worse than sopranos. They can be hell. I know, because I'm a ballerina. I'd rather be Bugs Bunny, but that's that."

She laughs. She laughs all the time.

"Be careful about the legend bit, it's too funny. The Kubla Khan situation — I was, somewhat, Mrs Khan, or the bag lady with all the bills. But there is no Khan. They don't do things that way here."

She helped build the pleasure dome, the Opera House, though she was locked out at the opening. But she got in with the help of friends and then she went away.

Magda Saleh was born in 1944 and is still very beautiful. She will always be beautiful, even when she gets old. She is that way made. She is like Emma Eames, from the golden age of the Met, who said: "Beauty. I make my own as I go along." Magda Saleh says that beauty is fun and the true product that stays with a woman.

"It's nice to do this article, but lets not have too much of the life trial. And from this she grew and her suffering assisted her... oh, please no, not that."

But she has endured a hard life.

"No complaints, no grumbles. Life is too precious and rare, costing more every day. So let's keep no rags in the memory cupboard."

If non of this then what? No CV, because CVs are a bore. No hard times, no scandals. Everyone loves a scandal. Culture, from the times of the Medici, has thrived on corruption and scandal. Even the golden age that Mitterand and Jacques Lang gave to France went down in an odour of succulent scandal. What lies before the public and the performing artist is either a ruling system given to dogs, race horses and noisy women or brave souls, in love with art and ballerina assolutas, who are a bit careless with other people's cash.

"Yes, well, better the last days of the Roman Empire with art than without. We know where to look for that, the empire without art. So long live the opera, and let's hope it is expensive. Better that than nuclear missiles. But I'm not in Egypt right now to rake up the past."

So why is she here?

"To see what is going on. I don't live here anymore. Born here, raised here, danced here. And right now the past seems speedier than the present. The ballet had brilliant beginnings in the fifties and sixties. Egyptian dancers are splendid if they are given a chance and we were given more than a chance in those early days. But the era was trouble fraught — war, disaster, national situations of awesome difficulty. Then the old place in Ezbikiya burned down. I stood and wept as it burned. Then nothing. I went to Russia, I speak Russian, I love the Bolshoi, it was my life. The dancers who left Egypt went from disaster to disaster. The men in those days..."

The voice trails off. Saleh is moved.

"Abdel-Moneim Kamal was great. Egyptian men are. They are great dancers. But today dancing is not much of a career for a young man. If you can jump you become some sort of ball chaser, tennis, basket or foot. All that macho slap and tickle on TV. But chasing lady swans through snow storms in stretch latex tights is out."

"Ballerinas, though, are still in, though they are getting taller and taller, and need husky six footers to heave them around in the air. Ballet must skip over these precipices, it's changing into something else. Giselle will soon need a giant to balance her on his back, because she, too, will have become a giantess. The challenge is a thrill."



Magda Saleh, left, with the legendary Ulanova, whom she first saw at the age of 12, and Nelli Atallah

Magda Saleh would like to promote Egyptian musical talent. She is here to look, listen, and hopefully to act. So she keeps calm, never losing her cool.

"But I'm a housewife," she protests. "I'm married. Like the old song *Give me liberty or give me love*... well fate gave me both. It took the two of us 15 years to make ourselves a married couple."

Saleh is now a resident New Yorker who adores the city. She travels worldwide and observes. It is interesting to watch her. She is neither tall nor short, expedient for a ballerina, as she once was and always will be. Like all dancers she is not *bien planté*. In no way does she suggest repose. She floats and flutters about, and seems to turn into a Byzantine empress in gold, ivory and purple.

She looks New York. There is that particular thing about some particular New Yorkers that proclaims that they inhabit the big one by the river. She is neat, quiet and completely turned out for the battle of life, the daily confrontation, without an ounce of soft centre. Never ask these angels for help. But she is neither pretentious nor condescending, frothy or fulsome. And she is certainly not a monument in spite of her fame. She is a perfectly mannered deflator of all that and so is New York, her city.

Like Fontaine she had famous feet, and like most dancers' feet they gave her hell.

"But the ecstasy of the dance wipes away all pains, until they return tomorrow."

And now she is here in Cairo, and can be with her revered Ulanova, whom she first saw when she was 12. There are some things beyond value for everyone and Ulanova is probably that thing for Saleh.

Magda Saleh had a short career, just six years at the top. She danced Giselle in Russia's two greatest theatres, the Bolshoi and the Mariensky. After six years she gave her last performance of Giselle at the Bolshoi, her farewell as a dancer. And suddenly she says, quietly: "Light, colour, extravagance...that's all. See you tonight at *The Nutcracker*."

She is still out front on her up trip. She knows everyone, and where all the best things are to be had. Quite good for a middling tall, not so short, Byzantine.

One for the road





photos: Sherif Sonbol

"Always the same thrill — the special Bolshoi frisson of risk, danger and final physical victory over all the odds and dangers"

The Bolshoi's back, so enjoy them while you can because in these rickety times one never knows and until they come back you won't be getting any of the same because their same is unique — or was. As for bats and furries, they haunt. They are dark creatures, like dreams of the past — and being dark, they usually haunt in the light. And the Bolshoi used to be light, the top, the blood pure of dancing. And now — the furries are coming thick and fast, and the Bolshoi's light is dimming. They are losing pace. They listen too long, like Khedive Ismail in former times, to the voice of the Lorelei. And the voice of the Lorelei was never heard from the East.

As a word, the Bolshoi used to stand for big, bright, beautiful and wild. Only one of these words — possibly "beautiful" — can be used now, no one quite knows why. Destiny, events, it may have been; but the edifice survives. So here it is, or what's left of it. Make your own judgment. Gallant they always were. The show is not the greatest show on earth any more, but they fight on. Whatever forces within the contumacious ballet world are against them — dance, theatre with its jockey-short guerrilla snipers — they still dance as no one else.

Russian dancers are like Yugoslav sopranos — floating with muscle and passion in the regions beyond words. The Bolshoi has its unique position because the classical dance theatre is all there is of dance. The rest is novelettish noise. Russian classical dance spawned all its own detractors. But the central support of all dance were the Bolshoi and the Kirov. They were the living legends that emerged to conquer the West. That is the reason the Bolshoi in particular perform under a microscope. That is why these two productions, though fine in may ways, disturb and unnerve. Are they losing their grip? The result could be grey for theatre everywhere.

Last visit they brought two of their most unique works: *Spartacus* and *La Bayadere*. Everything was in the correct order — decor, music and, most important, performance. We saw then some of the greatest dancers of this part of the century. This visit brings two Tchaikovsky works: *The Nutcracker* and *Swan Lake*. Tchaikovsky must be placed first because his music keeps them both afloat and is without peer as support for what conquered Europe. The two works became history. *The Nutcracker* entered the nursery and became a magical pantomimic journey for family Christmas visits. This tradition even holds in Cairo today. *Swan Lake* became, from its first years of pre-1914, one of the great icons of a new, crazy romanticism of which the early silent cinema took hold. This was exploded in 1914 when the world of *Swan Lake* was blown to pieces. It survived and does today, even more mysteriously since the Russia that produced it has also collapsed. The swan queen herself is a bird of collapse.

So here are two caryatids of the Bolshoi. The first, *The Nutcracker*, is the Don Carlos of the ballet. It has a lot of loose ends, like the Verdi opera, to its synopsis. Everyone has a go at it in an effort to add one more choice piece of choreography or music.

This production puts Yuri Grigorovich first as story arranger and choreographer. E T A Hoffmann gets credit for the story. Petipa, the person most mentioned as choreographer, gets acknowledged only as screenplay devisor. And Grigorovich gets all the credit for the production which, nevertheless, sticks pretty close to Petipa and could have stuck lot closer for enjoyment. This version was seen here a few years ago at the Conference Hall in Nasr City with a distant relation of the original Bolshoi. The decor of the present production is by one S Virsaladze. Throughout the show the scenery is travel-worn and sagging. This has to be forgotten when the company begins to dance. And this is possible when they dance as only they can, but the eye intrudes rudely and what's hanging about in the background causes pain. This is, after all, the Bolshoi.

This latest showing of *The Nutcracker*, seen on 9 April, goes awry from the beginning. Scene — snow — and more snow falling through gauze curtains and stale plastic drapes. Where is the lovely, warm-looking Moscow townhouse of the story — where all is safety, warmth and hospitality?

The invited guests begin to come through the street to the house. There is no entrance, merely the dark wings of the theatre. No variety either in the people or their dance steps — mostly tiny *pas de bourree* across stage. It tires the eye. The children don't romp as they should. No suggestion of joie de vivre. The guests arrive and are welcomed by Drosselmeyer, played by Alexei Loparevitch, and Mary's father Stahlbaum (Andrei Sitnikov). Both these dancers have presence and stylish legs. Mary is Anastassia Iatsenko who is a Bolshoi treasure: lively, distinguished, not too many smiles of welcome and with clear fresh line. She's a kind of fairy child, so there's no mugging. She brought great delight to a huge audience and goes from infant to child to star ballerina with ease, and always a person, never a doll. The Nutcracker Prince, Jury Klevtsov, travels the same path. He is a proper male dancer — no matter to where he flies or what steps he takes, he always looks soft-strong and ready for more take-offs as soon as they come. Secure as a partner, he manages to be polite but never wet. And his jumps and *tours en l'air* are stretched and large. So the audience loves the Bolshoi and forgets the wrinkles on the picture. Thank God there are plenty of rats in the first act, good burly rats with a splendid king (Vladimir Moiseev). One hopes they find a secure home somewhere in the regions of the damned to which the story finally confines them.

At this point, *The Nutcracker* takes off into classic land, the heaven of the *ballet blanc*. Prince gathers Mary in his arms. Tchaikovsky starts more of his wonders and the soft-grained Russian waltz begins. Everything goes into the air, including Mary and her Prince. The scene of the voyage and the famous divertissement which have found their way into many other ballet companies other than the Bolshoi begins. The decor worsens — soiled mosquito net Christmas trees, hot water bottles hanging from magic lanterns. Anyway, the show goes on.

At this point really it must be said, the Cairo Opera Ballet Company, under Abdel-Moneim Kamel's predatory and penetrating eye has mounted a far more poetic and genuinely warming and lovable *Nutcracker* than this Bolshoi. Colourful, rich, proudly danced and accompanied by Filev and the Cairo Opera Orchestra, it is one of the beauties which the Cairo Opera House has set before happily large audiences.

Back to the water bottles and the Christmas tree, under a lowering sky, the beauties of the music so well-played by Sotnikov unfold the dances of the travels of the Prince and his girl. In every instance, Cairo does them better, especially the Indian dance. Cairo dresses them all in luscious colours and perfectly tailored clothes. The Bolshoi should know better than to dress the Russian dancers in pale mauve satin pants. Finally, as Mary and her man start the run-up to the final pas de deux, there are some straight forward classic ballet fire works — double turns everywhere, grands jetés and spectacular lifts for Klevtsov and Iatsenko. It warmed up but it was too late. This *Nutcracker* had no crack to it and most of the nuts stayed unopened.

Libido delecto. Siegfried's secret life with swans. This is *Swan Lake* again, on 11 April. Do not worry, it won't go away. The production is with us to the end. Where is it taking place? In the Hofbrue Haus, Munich, early end of the Middle Ages any time before Hitler, though the decor is much the same. How did it get here to Cairo, by plane? It looks as if it flew here under its own volition. Anyway, on stage there's the queen and her son Seigfried looking more of a pain than usual. It's his birthday. He's 21 but looks more. She's into cell-therapy and so looks like his daughter. The decor is brown varnish over old mud. Stationed around the great hall of the palace are trumpeters, like people out of *Macbeth*. Everyone looks devious, cynical and bored, especially Seigfried. He's brooding over feathers.

The queen tells him he's got to marry on the morrow and she's producing a clutch of court birds from which he must pick a wife. She says this in old Bolshoi mime which brooks no contradiction, and she swoops off. Inside himself he's rumpled. He's got to kill something, why not swans? And so off he and his minions go to the Swan Lake. It's all here. Ivanov, Petipa, Grigorovich and early Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer. The *Lake* flopped in Moscow so they took it to the Maryinsky Theatre in St Petersburg where it became the hit of the imperial court.

It was early cinema style — before the style was invented. Better not to read the libretto and stay sane. It would never have lasted a season but for Tchaikovsky's music. He made the swans, the feathers, the icy lake and the absurd people genuinely mythic and, in a weird way, warm. When an audience first hears the harps sweeping through the dark depths of the swan soul, the theatre opens out into spaces only musical genius can reach. So we had the lake, the birds and the snow — the whole production more or less in Antarctica, put together by the master-mechanic Grigorovich in a story of possession, rather like the one Nureyev did for himself and Fontaine at the Wiener Staats Oper years ago and was never bettered as a new take of the lake. At least it's brief.

The prince goes to the lake to shoot the big birds, finds irrational goings-on by the shore, and instead of king penguins meets the Swan Queen in white feathers. They both become manipulated puppets of a slithery greenish man who plots to destroy their love. She, of course, isn't a swan at all. She's a society beauty who's fallen under his spell.

On the morrow — the queen's party. Prince won't use a wife: he wants a swan. Then the landslide — another bird, black this time, arrives at the party. Prince thinks it's the white swan in a new outfit. There's a showdown. As the black swan dazzles him with her dance, he flings caution to the winds, declares his love to her and the entire court collapses. They are back at the lake. They stick together, make the sign of the cross. The green man dies and the couple, amid the palpitation of harps and strings, melt into eternity. There's nothing like a lake.

Forgetting the decor, the costumes are often negatively attractive. The Cairo Opera Orchestra did well, though not always hitting and judging the right beats for the jumps of the dancers. The corps de ballet were sumptuous and mystical. The four cygnets, very large ladies for a change, won great applause for great accuracy. The villain, Nicholai Tsiskaridze, is an exciting dancer who will make a new path through conventions. He is vivid, musical and wild.

The two principal dancers, Mark Peretokine as Seigfried and Nina Semizorova as the Swan, were a surprise. Their entire performance was heightened to another plain, above the rest of the ballet. Both are stars of the Bolshoi, have the style it used to demand and have that strange, otherworldly certitude of movement to the smallest flick of a wrist which displays a class, a time and a tradition chilling to watch. This is what dancing is all about — Isidora Duncan, Cretan farmers, dervishes and the classic ballet — all, if great, remove themselves from their surroundings. They cast off their bodily functions at total risk to achieve a calm amid the storm of movement of which they are the centre.

Last year the celebrated Bolshoi male dancer Alexandre Vetrov, as Crassus in *Spartacus*, distanced his jumps, so huge that they took him from the far side of the opera stage to the very edge of the orchestral pit. He went so near the edge that a fraction of an inch more and he would have landed into the orchestra. It was his muse which invited him to take such a risk, the Bolshoi's special danger brink. Peretokine and Semizorova went brink-wise in their dancing as the prince and the Swan Queen. Both are imperturbably calm, grand and expansive. Neither smiled very often. They did nothing to excite applause.

Semizorova is aloof, almost off-putting in her fixation on the mystery of the movement which flows from her body with quite disturbing regularity and strength. She has perfect feet, is tall, arms and neck postures positive and an absolutely stunning head. She holds it majestically and it puts her on a steely positive base. A piece of road traffic would have to obey her insistence on remaining undisturbed at the top of her movement until she is ready to descend. Peretokine is a noble, heroic partner, never passive or pushy but is there to further enhance the splendour of their joint effort. In the ball scene of the second act, the so-called Black Swan Act, Semizorova, who danced both roles, did her infamous *fouetee sur place*. She then moved downstage as the applause rang forth, turned and took her leap to the shoulders of the Prince. There was the same thrill — the special Bolshoi frisson of risk, danger and final physical victory over all the odds and dangers of the classical ballet. To see it done with a sword-like precision was more than enough. To forget them — impossible. They were what the Bolshoi is: something about splendour, and of that there cannot be too much.

Plain Talk

I am always happy to receive a new book. There is something sensual about touching the crisp pages and inhaling the smell of the paper and its binding. There are few things more pregnant with possibility than a new book.

This is what I felt when I received a copy of *New Writing*, published by Vintage Press in association with the British Council. Certainly I was looking forward to this new volume. I was not disappointed; if anything, the present volume offers more diverse material than earlier ones.

New Writing distinguishes itself in the fact that it is not just an anthology of short stories or poems, but includes a number of articles about different subjects that help to give the volume a comprehensive quality rarely found in anthologies.

According to the blurb, this anthology "brings together some of our most formidable talents, placing new names alongside established ones and includes poetry, essays, short stories and extracts from novels in progress. Distinctive, innovative and entertaining, it is essential reading for all those interested in British writing today".

What I find really wholesome, if one can use this term, is the mixture of the famous with the up-and-coming, as well as the inclusion of some writing by non-Britishers. This goes to confirm the fact that English has become a global language used by writers of other countries.

It will be difficult to give even a bird's eye-view of the various contents of this volume, but I was struck by an essay about a subject which is close to my heart: translation. It was written by David Bellos and has the attractive title *Our Own Other Tongues, Literary Translations in the 1990s*. Starting with the assumption that Britain and America have long been resistant to foreign writing, the author goes on to show that, in Britain anyway, the situation is changing. The long-standing imbalance seems to be undergoing an obvious transformation. Changes during the last 25 years are due, the author believes, to Britain's joining of the European Community.

According to the writer, there are about 1,500 translated works from many dozens of languages now appearing every year in the UK. As a result, the shelves — notably fiction — of many bookstores display translated works by European as well as Asian, African and Arab writers. The 1990s seem to be the golden years for literary translation, especially of fiction. Penguin is closely associated with this movement of literary translations and its Penguin Classics made available to the common reader classical, medieval and modern works from all over the world.

The author then goes on to discuss what a good translation is. In a good translation, Bellos claims, there should be a compromise between accuracy and fluency. That was the criterion of the translations of the classics, Dante, Balzac, Dostoievsky, Mann and many others. By giving the necessary fluency, the translators created a large new readership for otherwise inaccessible literature.

There is a historical and perceived resistance of English to what the writer calls "foreignness". This means that there is a very high demand for making translated texts read smoothly and fluently, "that is to say to read as far as possible as if they had been written in English in the first place". A good translation is that which makes a foreign author sound natural in English to the extent that some foreign books can be mistaken for original ones.

The writer quotes F R Leavis' remark that Tolstoi was among the best novelists in the whole of English literature. This is not a unique example of what the writer calls "translation blindness". Many translated books have become a part of approved national curricula. I remember how during my studies at the English Department of Cairo University*The Cherry Orchard* and *A Doll's House* were included in the course.

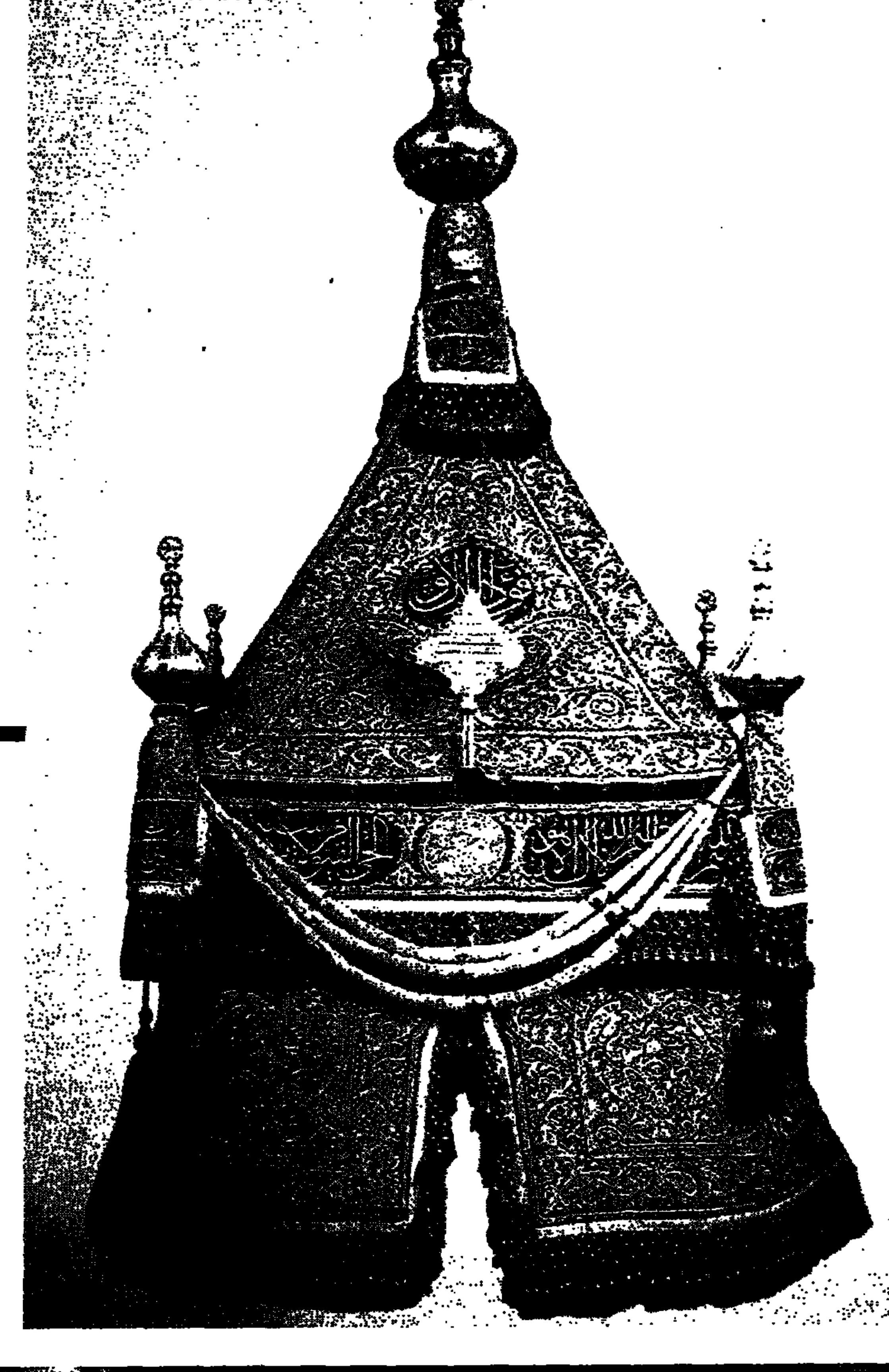
I like the writer's conclusion that there are as many different ways of coming to a translation as there are translators. He believes that translators invent the language that they use. "Whether working with classics or with the latest star from the Frankfurt Book Fair, the terms of the settlement between the foreign and familiar, between the demands of the original and the tolerance of the target audience have to be worked out afresh each time. Which is why translation will always remain a literary as well as a linguistic challenge, and one of the writerly arts," Bellos concluded.

Mursi Saad El-Din

Al-Ahram Weekly

The pilgrims' prospects

From 10 to 13 of the Muslim month of Dhu El-Hijjah, the Feast of the Sacrifice (*Eid El-Adha*) is celebrated simultaneously in all parts of the Muslim world. For those who are performing the annual pilgrimage, the feast represents the culmination of this manifestation of faith. **Fayza Hassan** discovers the rituals surrounding the Great Pilgrimage, while photographer **Mohamed Wassim** captures the last fragment of a dying tradition



The *kiswa* (covering) of the Ka'ba has for centuries fired the imagination of travellers who witnessed its conveyance and the pageant that accompanied its departure from Cairo to the Holy City of Mecca. E W Lane in particular provides a full description of how the four pieces of the *kiswa* and the *burqu'* (the curtain of the door) were paraded through Cairo on their way to Al-Hussayn Mosque where they were lined and sewn together in preparation for the departure of the pilgrims. Left: The *kiswa* King Fouad sent to Mecca in 1925

It is the *fard* (duty) of every practicing Muslim to perform the *hajj* (pilgrimage) at least once if s/he has the means to do so. Many of the poorest believers cannot afford the voyage; some who are really determined save their whole lives to realise this dream. Often, grown children will pool their resources to pay for their old parents' trip to the Holy Shrines.

There are three ways for pilgrims from Egypt to travel to Mecca, the most expensive — and shortest — being the touristic *hajj*, which is organised by the Ministry of Tourism in cooperation with a number of travel agencies to which quotas are allocated. For this type of *hajj*, pilgrims pay up to LE25,000 per person for services and accommodation during the round trip, which lasts approximately 10 days. A cheaper way, partly subsidised by the government, involves entering the lottery organised by the Ministry of the Interior every year, but, while a great number of prospective pilgrims apply, a relatively small number are lucky enough to draw a winning number.

Finally, some organisations attached to the Ministry of Social Affairs offer either air or sea transportation and accommodation at reduced prices to their members. For a short time, an overland bus trip was organised by some travel agencies, but the pilgrims complained about the hardships of the voyage and the service was discontinued.

Before the advent of modern travel however, performing the pilgrimage was not only costly, but dangerous as well.

For more than a thousand years, during the month of Shawwal, Muslim pilgrims on their way to Mecca gathered around Birket El-Hajj ("Pilgrimage Lake"), northwest of Cairo. The *birka* and its environs provided enough room for camping and water for the caravans, which comprised thousands of animals. The pilgrims brought with them enough provisions and drinking water for the voyage, which lasted over a month.

They came from Turkey, Syria, the Maghreb and Africa and would split up into two groups, the first departing a day earlier to occupy the first encampment, from which they began the next leg of their journey as the second group arrived.

It was not unusual in those days for caravans to include up to 50,000 pilgrims and their animals, a number difficult to accommodate together in any one spot along the way. In the desert, the travellers rested from noon until the middle of the night. The voyage was long and fraught with danger. Often the caravans did not return before autumn, writes Marcel Clerget in *Le Caire, Etude de Gèographie Urbaine et d'Histoire Economique* (Cairo, 1934).

The pilgrims, having congregated in Cairo, took either the overland route, which traversed Upper Egypt, or went by sea, in the latter case crossing the desert and embarking either at Suez or Qusayr. For various reasons, the overland route, although longer, was preferred.

The Red Sea was known since antiquity to be unfavourable to navigation almost ten months a year. The Suez road was abandoned in 1058; in 1187, Renaud de Chatillon attacked a caravan heading for Qusayr (where the travellers embarked for Yanbu' or Jeddah). Thereafter, the ports of Suez and Qusayr were no longer used.

The overland routes varied according to circumstance, but in general the pilgrims followed the Nile's course to Upper Egypt, crossing the desert at Qulzum, Suez or Tor to reach Aila, then descended along the Red Sea eastern coast, passing Nakl, Agrud, El-Mueyla and Badr, and finally arriving at Yanbu'.

With the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869, steamships became a better and quicker mode of transportation which the pilgrims adopted readily. To this day, many pilgrims still go to Mecca by ship, which remains cheaper than air travel.

Between 1908 and the beginning of World War I, it looked as if railroad travel would provide a popular alternative for the voyage between Damascus and Medina, but long stretches of track were destroyed during the war, rendering the railroad useless as a means of conveying pilgrims to and fro. The railroad was never rebuilt and, when the pilgrimage was resumed, most pilgrims travelled by sea via Suez. The land route was only used by those who went to Mecca by motor vehicle.



Throughout history, the pilgrims encountered a variety of problems and were confronted with downright hostility at times. Caravans were often attacked by groups of marauding Bedouins. Towards the end of their rule, the desperate Fatimids had imposed a tax on the pilgrims who had to pass through their territory on their way to Mecca. Those who could not pay were cruelly punished. According to Ibn Jubayr (in Desmond Stewart, *Great Cairo, Mother of the World*, Cairo, 1996), "among the various inflictions devised, was hanging by the testicles or such foul acts...," but with Salaheddin such practices were discontinued at once and the pilgrims found safety in Cairo once more.

During the first year of Shagaret El-Durr's short reign (1250-1257), an important addition was made to the caravan of pilgrims which changed its aspect for centuries to come. Shagaret El-Durr herself made the pilgrimage to Mecca concealed in a richly ornamented *howdah* (litter). The following year, "too busy with problems of power to make the pilgrimage again, she had sent the *howdah*, or *mahmal*, empty of herself, but containing the aura of royal power.

"The symbolism of the gesture caught the imagination of the people and their rulers. In its solemn procession it echoed both the Hebrew Ark of the Covenant and the ritual boats of the pharaohs borne above the heads of the people," writes Stewart. "Later rulers, beginning with Baybars, maintained the custom and the departure of the *mahmal* for Mecca became an annual event."

At the start of the 16th century, under the rule of Qansuh El-Ghuri, Ibn Iyas describes the departure of the pilgrimage to Mecca, "the chief religious occasion, as it had been for more than eight centuries", as follows.

"On 9 Rajab, Cairo was decked with flags for the procession of the *mahmal*. The lancers wore their traditional red robes. Their chief was Timur Hasani, and the four supervisors were the same as the preceding year, but the place of Abu Yazid, who had recently died was taken by Misir Bey, the emir of kettle-drums. The lancers performed their manoeuvres better than the previous year. The sultan passed the night at the royal palace, where he presided at a magnificent fireworks display. The mounted processions passed through the city streets in the ancient manner and the lancers processed twice in the Meydan Rumeila. At the end of the parade, they dismounted and kissed the ground before the sultan as had been done in the reign of Zahir Khoshqadam. It is stated that Qait Bey introduced this new custom when he directed the *mahmal* procession. Then the *mahmal* was paraded, followed by the holy coverings for the Ka'ba and the tomb of Abraham."

From these times on, the pageant of the Great Pilgrimage was established, including the procession of the pilgrims to Mecca accompanied by the *mahmal*, the *kiswa* (covering) of the Ka'ba and that of the tomb of Abraham and, finally, the *surrah* (purse), which was an important amount paid yearly by Egypt and financed by various pious endowments (*awqaf*) for the upkeep of the Holy Shrines and the remuneration of those employed in the service of those shrines.

A complete and colourful account of the procession of the *mahmal* leaving Cairo in the mid-nineteenth century is provided by E W Lane in *Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians* (Cairo, 1989). The British traveller observed it "from a good place at a shop in the main street through which [the caravan] passed towards the gate called Bab-en-Nasr."

The procession, in the 1830s, seems to have been as full of pomp and circumstance as it had been in Ayyubid times. Lane writes: "In the latter part of Shawwal, not always on the same day of the month, but generally on or about the twenty-third, the principal officers and escort of the great caravan of pilgrims pass from the Citadel through the metropolis in grand procession, followed by the *mahmal*. The procession is called that of the *mahmal*. The various persons who take part in it, most of whom proceed with the caravan to Mecca, collect in the Kara Meydan and the Rumeyleh (two large open tracts) below the Citadel, and there take their place in the prescribed order...

"First a cannon was drawn along, about three hours after sunrise. It was a small field piece to be used for the purpose of firing signals for the departure of the caravan after each halt. Then followed two companies of irregular Turkish Cavalry (*Delees* and *Tufekjees*), about five hundred men, most shabbily clad, and having altogether the appearance of banditti. Next... came several men mounted on camels, and each beating a pair of large copper kettle-drums called *nakkarah*s attached to the fore part of the saddle. Other camels were all slightly tinged in a dingy orange red with henna. Some of them had a number of fresh, green palm branches fixed upright upon the saddles like enormous plumes; others were decorated with small flags... several had a large bell hung on each side; some again bore water skins; and one was laden with the *khazneh*, a square case covered with red cloth, containing the treasure for defraying those expenses of the pilgrimage which fall upon the government. The baggage of the Emeer El-Hajj (or Chief of the Pilgrims) then followed, borne by camels. With his furniture and provisions etc...was conveyed the new *kiswa*..."

Followed a number of Sufis, numerous camel drivers, water-carriers, sweepers, then more camels with palm branches and others with bells. "Next the *takhtarawan* (or litter) of the Emeer El-Hajj, covered with red cloth, was borne along by two camels, the foremost of which had a saddle decorated with a number of small flags..." Then came the Guide of the Caravan (Dalil El-Hajj), more dervishes and camels, followed by about 50 members of the Pasha's household, more officers and more members of the household of lesser rank. "These were followed by several other officers of the court, on foot, dressed in kaftans of cloth of gold. Next came two swordsmen, naked to the waist, and each having a small rounded shield," who preceded yet more dervishes and camel drivers. "The sounds of drums and fifes were heard, and a considerable body of Nizam, or regular troops, marched by."

Then came the wali (chief magistrate of









For a decade, photographer Ann Parker and writer Avon Neal travelled throughout Egypt, stopping in remote villages, in search of paintings on the walls of buildings, commemorating their owners' performance of the Great Pilgrimage. They collected more than

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illustration: courtesy of Maged Farag

the police), several of his officers, the attendants of *Emeer El-Hajj*, the *Emeer himself, three katibs* (clerks), *a troupe of* Maghrabi horsemen, "three Mubaligh of the Mountain whose office is to repeat certain words of the *Khateeb* (or preacher) on Mount Arafat." These in turn were followed by more camel drivers, water-carriers, *sweepers, etc... "In the midst of* these, rode the Imams of the four orthodox sects, one to each sect." More dervishes with tall banners and flags followed. Finally, "kettle-drums, hautboys, and other instruments, at the head of each of these companies, produced a harsh music. They were followed by *members of* various trades, each body headed by their sheikh. Next came several camels and then the *mahmal*."

After Shagaret *El-Durr started the tradition, the shape of the mahmal sent to* Mecca every year did not change. Six centuries after she travelled to Mecca, Lane, in 1836, gave a detailed description: "It is a square skeleton-frame of wood," he writes, "with a *pyramidal top*; and has a *covering of black brocade* richly worked with inscriptions and ornamental embroidery in gold; in some parts upon a ground of green or red silk, with tassels surmounted by silver balls. Its covering is not always made after the same pattern, *with regard* to the decorations; but in every cover I have seen, I have remarked on the upper part of the front, a view of the Temple of Mecca, worked in gold; and over it the Sultan's cipher. It contains nothing; but *has two mushafs (or copies of the* Koran), *one* on a small scroll, the other in the usual form of a book, also small, each enclosed in a case of gilt silver, attached externally at the top."

The camel which was chosen each year *to carry the sacred burden* was also the object of much attention. He has to be "a specially tall and handsome camel... his reward would be retirement from all menial labour for the rest of his days," writes Steward. *Lane also describes how eager the people* were to touch the *mahmal*: "Many of the people in the street pressed violently towards it, to touch it with their hands, which, having done so, they kissed; and many of the women who witnessed the spectacle from the latticed *windows of the houses* let down their shawls or head-veils, in *order to touch* with them the sacred object."

The *kiswa* is the immense black cloth with which the Ka'ba is covered. A *brocaded band of calligraphic* script, *embroidered in gold threads, runs across the* entire upper part. Every year, in a private ceremony, the Ka'ba is scrubbed clean by religious dignitaries, the previous year's *kiswa* removed, and the new one draped over the entire structure. *The old covering, having been taken off* carefully, *is* cut into pieces to be sold to pilgrims as amulets or keepsakes.

The *kiswa* which was sent annually with the caravan of pilgrims coming from Egypt, was manufactured in Cairo until *the middle of the 20th century, although* at certain periods Yemen vied for the honour. It was cut and embroidered at the sultan's expense in the workshops of the Citadel and conveyed in great pomp a few days after the Bairam feast to the Mosque of *Al-Hussein, where it was sewn together* and lined in preparation for the approaching pilgrimage.

The *kiswa* was made of black silk brocade, covered with verses from the *Qur'an interwoven in silk* of the same colour and decorated with a large band across each side, ornamented with more verses of the Qur'an, worked in gold threads and surmounted with a border of gold. The *burqu'*, the veil or curtain *hung before the door of the* Ka'ba, is also of black brocade, similarly embroidered.

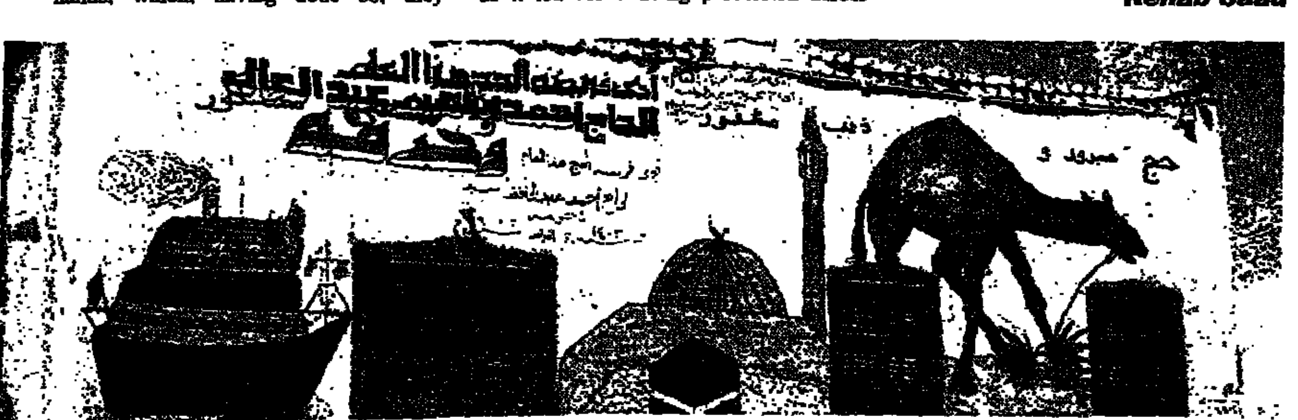
"In times long past," writes Avon Neal in *Hajj Paintings, Folk Art of the Great Pilgrimage* (New York, *1995*) "a fabulous mystique conjoining religious and political elements grew up around the *kiswa*. This silken covering was traditionally made in Egypt and delivered each year by an extensive caravan to Mecca. For *Egyptians, this was a singular honour*. The legendary *mahmal*... carried a portion of the *kiswa* and a precious copy of the Holy Book, and provided a dramatic spectacle as it led the winding procession across burning desert sands. Because bandits and marauding tribesmen were noted for *attacking passing caravans.... it was* necessary for an armed *military escort to* accompany and protect the *mahmal*. The brightly caparisoned camels and uniformed soldiers presented a memorable pageant that attracted everyone's attention *as they* marched proudly into the Holy City to the *accompaniment of shrill music*, dancing and a merry din of noise-making. It was this way for generations until, in 1926, a controversy arose over the *mahmal*'s armed guards entering Holy Mecca. The dispute escalated into violence and several lives were *lost*."

Some thirty years later, the *mahmal* and *kiswa* sent by Abdel-Nasser in 1962 were the object of a similar incident, fuelled by political undercurrents and the war of Yemen. *On that occasion, the mahmal returned to Egypt, finally bringing the tradition* to an end.

In the beginning of the reign of Mohamed Ali, the *kiswa* was manufactured in a workshop at the Citadel, but later the workshop was moved to *El-Khoronfish, where it exists to this day, entrusted with* the safekeeping of the last *kiswa* brought back in 1962. Run by the government, this workshop only manufactures covers for the tombs of a few revered sheikhs. *The artisan who worked on the last kiswa*, Kamel Youssef Assil, *was retired* last week; with him, the traditional art of hand-embroidering the sacred script is going to disappear.

"They have worked on the *kiswa* here *for continuous generations, hundreds of* years," says Mohamed Ahmed Ouda, the head storehouse keeper, "the father teaching his son. Many of our artisans have gone to Saudi Arabia, where they make *the kiswa now. It is a* whole part of our history that is dying and will be forgotten." Ouda often visits his old colleagues at the time of the pilgrimage. He was shocked to see that machines are now used to produce the intricate designs that were *so painstakingly made by hand in* Egypt.

additional reporting:
Rehab Saad



150 photographic inscriptions, representations of religious scenes and images of transportation to the Holy Shrines



The facade of the last workshop in which the *kiswa* of the Ka'ba was manufactured and in which the last *kiswa* is kept safely under lock. A beehive of activity, where 80 workers once busily embroidered in silver and gold the Qur'anic verses and calligraphy which traditionally decorated the *kiswa*, its large work area (opposite) is now empty. The only surviving artisan who participated in the making of the last *kiswa* was retired a few days ago. With his departure, the skill, passed on from father to son for many generations, will probably disappear. The workshop, on El-Khoronfish Street in Gamaliya functions as a museum and produces coverings for the tombs of sheikhs in and around Cairo

Tutankhamun's foreign tastes

Did Tutankhamun enjoy foreign imports? **Lyla Pinch Brock** reports on the latest findings from a study of the boy-king's clothing.

A few items of clothing found in Tutankhamun's tomb suggest Syrian influence and manufacture, said textiles expert Gillian Vogelsang-Eastwood of the University of Leiden in a talk at the Netherlands Institute in Cairo. The day marked the end of four years' study for the team of specialists. They had examined more than 500 items of clothing from the Tomb of Tutankhamun in storage in the Egyptian Museum for over 70 years. Unlike most of the objects from the tomb, very little of the collection had been studied.

A number of boxes of clothing were found during Howard Carter's discovery of the tomb in 1922. As conservator Arthur Mace wrote, it was in very poor condition. "We have had some fearful problems at the tomb. Just now we are working on a box which contains garments and shoes all covered with beadwork. The cloth is so rotten you can hardly touch it, and the beads drop off the shoes if you look at them." The clothing had been stuffed roughly into the boxes, perhaps by the priests restoring the tomb after two robberies. Linen was a treasured item and topped the loot list — all of the king's bedding and sheets had been stolen.

Vogelsang-Eastwood's aim is to reconstruct the garments and try to interpret where and when they were worn. Her results are based on actual examination with reference to Howard Carter's notes and photographs taken by Harry Burton. The last part of the study focused on the king's imports, his gloves and footwear.

Two "imported" garments were long tunics. Her reconstruction of the dalmatics revealed a wide-sleeved, knee-length religious robe made of a single sheet of fine linen, approximately four and a half metres long and sewn up the sides. Dyed woven bands embroidered with the king's cartouches and Syrian motifs were stitched onto the bottom and sides and into the neckband.

According to Vogelsang-Eastwood, the neckband was woven in a circle, using a technique (and a loom) completely unknown in Egypt. A pair of sleeves made of finer material, found separately, were apparently meant to be attached to the armholes. Vogelsang-Eastwood also believes that a one-by-two metre length of red-banded fabric was worn over it — the "Syrian wrap".

The second tunic, she says "fell to dust" upon discovery, but Howard Carter wrote in his official record of the tomb's discovery that he was able to reconstruct the tunic, at least on paper. "The whole surface of the robe is covered with a network of faience beads, with a gold sequin filling in every alternate square on the net... At the borders of the robe there are bands of tiny glass beads of various colours, arranged in patterns... At the lower hem there was a band, composed of tiny beads arranged in a pattern, a pattern of which we were able to secure the exact details. From this band there hung, at equal intervals, a series of bead strings with a large pendant at the end of each string. We can thus calculate the circumference of the hem by multiplying the space between the strings by the number of pendants."

During the reign of Amenhotep III, a predecessor of Tutankhamun, foreign contact was at its height and Syrian clothing became quite elaborate. There are indications that it was valuable and sought after and that Tutankhamun's clothing was probably a foreign tribute. It was recorded that Tushratta, King of Mitanni in Syria, sent him a number of garments and leather shoes or sandals. Vogelsang-Eastwood says the tunics came from north Syria, Mitanni or the Greek isles.

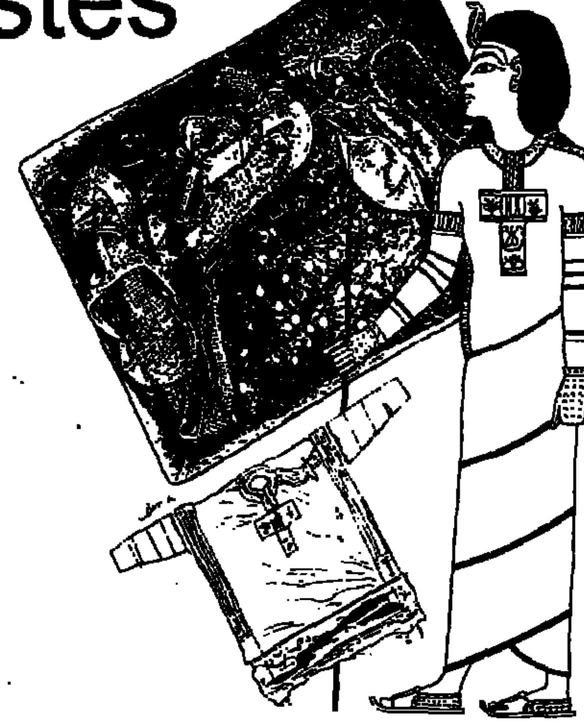
The clothing falls into two categories: made in Syria and sent to Egypt, and made in Egypt in Syrian style. It is foreign in both construction and appearance. Yet since the wardrobe is absolutely unique, no comparanda exists. Therefore, "our conclusions must be based on negative evidence," she said.

Her study of footwear and gloves was also revealing: 27 gloves were found in the tomb, of five different types, both short and long. There was also a child's pair and gauntlets to hold reins. The gauntlets had a separation between the index and middle finger and a hole to free the thumb for manipulation. Gloves were obviously a special item. Some of Tutankhamun's were made of heavy linen on the outside lined with lighter linen. One pair was 34 cm long and tapestry-woven on both sides with a tape added for securing at the wrist. Carter thought these gloves would have been worn with the dalmatics.

Of 93 items of footwear found in the tomb, none exhibited any signs of wear (according to Vogelsang-Eastwood, Tutankhamun took a European size 64). They ranged from simple rush sandals to a sheet-gold pair from the mummy. One unique pair was made of wood with marquetry veneer showing bound foreigners upon whom the king could "tread". Vogelsang-Eastwood described another pair with elaborate beaded decoration which Carter had found very difficult to salvage. Beaded side supports were joined by a band over the instep fastening with a tie and button. There was also a toe-stall.

Tutankhamun's wardrobe also contained a type of sock, made of linen and split up the front with toe ties on top, probably to hold it in place. Like gloves, there is no hieroglyphic word for socks, and they were probably of foreign inspiration.

The results of the study will be published as a catalogue of textiles and garments to be sold at the Egyptian Museum. Reconstructions of the garments will go on world tour.



The box of shoes and robes as it was found; the dalmatic; and the author's reconstruction of Tutankhamun wearing it with Syrian-style shoes and gloves

Port Said's promise

Port Said is a lovely city where one can spend a quiet weekend far from the pollution of Cairo. Touring landmarks, eating, drinking and shopping are all activities to keep one occupied in this quiet, sea-side community. **Rehab Saad** visited the Suez Canal city





I never expected Port Said to be an interesting city. My only previous knowledge of it was that it is a good, cheap shopping place. My trips were usually one-day tours targeting its rich markets. When my husband suggested spending a weekend there, I was not enthusiastic about the idea and suggested as an alternative Ismailia or Fayed, where we could relax on the beach and have good fish meals. Fortunately, he was not persuaded.

The journey from Cairo to Port Said took about two and a half hours. It was a pleasant road with good facilities, like petrol stations, ambulances, several small coffee shops, cafeterias and even full-sized restaurants.

We reached the city by noon, in time to enjoy the sunny, clear weather. We stayed in a three-star beach hotel overlooking the Mediterranean. We had booked a room, but it turned out to be a holiday apartment which, during the summer holiday, could be used by a family. It consisted of two bedrooms, a sitting room, kitchen and bathroom, all for just LE72 with breakfast. The furniture was not overly luxurious, but would be perfectly adequate for a family who would spend their days on the beach and return home only to eat and rest.

The first thing that struck me about Port Said, and I noticed it immediately upon entering the city, is that it is small and clean. It can easily be toured on foot, but if you decide on a taxi they are abundant and inexpensive. The Noras Beach, Helnan and Sonesta hotels all overlook the sea and have extensive trading annexes selling everything from canned food to deluxe cars.

In front of the Sonesta Hotel is the base of the statue of Ferdinand de Lesseps, the French engineer who dug the Suez Canal during the reign of Khedive Ismail. The statue itself is still in storage where it was placed for protection during the 1967 war with Israel. Around the statue is a promenade area which is frequented by many Port Said residents in need of outside activity.

El-Gomhoriya Street is the most famous in Port Said. Its beautiful buildings, including banks and currency exchange offices, date from early this century. The famous *Afrangy* (foreign) market, which has shops selling tax-free, imported products including home utilities, food, toys, curtains, carpets and clothes is also located here. More interesting, perhaps, than shopping itself, are the picturesque arcades where the shops are located. They radiate a whiff of days gone by, when cultivated travellers on Thomas Cook's first cruisers stopped over for a taste of Egypt's elegance.

El-Gomhoriya Street also has many old-style hotels, such as the Holiday, Regent and Panorama. These are most suitable for businessmen who prefer to stay in the hub of commercial activity.

Many small narrow streets nearby make up *El-Togary* (the commercial) market. Shops here sport prices less than those at the *Afrangy* market.

As Port Said is not just a holiday resort, it also has all the conveniences of a city: restaurants, coffee shops, cinemas and funfairs. Food is abundant and options range from fish, *kebab* and scallops to fast food. Naturally, on our first day, we wanted to take advantage of our proximity to the sea and have fish. Abu Essam, a restaurant which serves a wide variety of fresh seafood, was our choice. We ordered a substantial meal consisting of *mezza*, fish, calamari, rice with shrimp and salads. The meal for two cost us LE62, which was considerably less expensive than a meal in a comparable Cairo restaurant.

The second day we decided to go to one of Port Said's older restaurants, El-Iqtesad. There was no menu but the lone waiter was well-versed in the available selections and recited them off the cuff to each patron who entered the restaurant. I have never seen such quick service. As soon as we sat down, salads were served, and when we uttered the words "mixed vegetables," they were brought, hot and delicious, in two minutes. Shortly afterwards came our main dish of rice, *kebab* and *kofta*. I was pleasantly surprised by the restaurant's efficiency, courtesy and quality of food. Today's posh restaurants could use a lesson or two from El-Iqtesad.

Fast food restaurants are a new fashion in Port Said: Hamburgers, chicken fillet, fish fillet and combo meals are readily available in chains like Jack in the Box and Hot'n Tender. To my surprise, these have become popular among local residents who seem to have tired of fish and shrimp.

Port Said definitely needs more hotels of all calibres to accommodate visitors. However, I found the city to be the perfect weekend reprieve from the hustle and bustle in Cairo.

Site: Port Said
Attractions: Suez Canal, Port Said National Museum, Suez Canal Authority building.
Accommodation: Helnan Port Said (5-star), Sonesta Port Said (5-star), Al-Noras (3-star); Holiday Hotel (3-star), New Regent (3-star), Abu Simbel (2-star), Akry Hotel (1-star)
Getting there: Trains from Ramses station. Super Jet coach from Tahrir Square or Almaza.

Pyramid closed for now

The Pyramid of Menkaure at Giza is about to be closed for restoration, reports **Sherine Nasr**

Tourists and sightseers have less than two weeks to see the interior of the third of the Great Pyramids of Giza before a six-month closure for restoration which the Supreme Council of Antiquities (SCA) describes as "urgent".

"It will be closed from the beginning of May in order to give travel agents a chance to rearrange their programmes," said Zahi Hawass, director of antiquities on the plateau. "Once the restoration is complete," he added, "the plan is to adopt a rotation system. Each of the three pyramids will be closed at certain times of the year for maintenance."

Like the pyramids of Khufu and Khafre, Menkaure's has been subjected to a combination of factors that have had a negative impact on its preservation. "The heat, excessive humidity, lack of ventilation, but most of all the large number of visitors inside the pyramid have done a great deal of harm," said Hawass, who explained that studies have shown that each visitor leaves 20 grams of vapour behind. "It is easy to imagine how humid the interior corridors and chambers of a pyramid can become as the number of visitors increases," said Hawass.

Hawass explained that when the price for admission to Kufu's pyramid doubled a few years ago to LE20 "most of the tourists shifted their attention to Menkaure's pyramid because the entrance fee remained the same. At least 4,000 visitors come to the Giza Plateau daily, with the majority going inside the third pyramid."

Hawass ventured a personal observation: "If it were my decision, I would not allow any visitors inside the Pyramids. They are merely tombs. What is there for people to see when they go inside?" he wondered. "Out of the 104 pyramids in Egypt, those in Giza are the most important. Thus, their conservation should be given as much attention as possible." In the past, uncontrolled visits have resulted in salt accumulation in large quantities and humidity levels that "reached alarming rates in Menkaure's burial chamber. We had to act quickly before stones collapsed as happened in the second pyramid," he said.

This is the second closure of Menkaure's pyramid. The first occurred 10 years ago for general cleaning and conservation. "This time, excess salt will be treated, graffiti removed, a surveillance device installed, as well as a proper ventilation system and more advanced electric facilities," said Hawass. In other words, the third pyramid will enjoy the same facilities as the other two.

In order to lessen the pressure on the Pyramids at Giza, the Pyramid of Unas at Saqqara was recently reopened to visitors. "It belongs to the last king of the Fifth Dynasty and contains some of the most beautiful carvings of the mortuary literature, the Pyramid Texts," explained Hawass.

During the six-month closure of the Pyramid of Menkaure, the SCA will have a chance to resume the excavations begun last July to the east and south of the pyramid. These are conducted "in an attempt to discover the ruins of the ramp on which the stones for building the pyramid were transported."

Last year, excavations in the area yielded a red granite statue of Ramses II weighing three tons and measuring three feet in height. "It was the first time we unearthed a statue of Ramses in the area" said Hawass. He added that they have been unable so far to explain why the name Mai, Ramses II's architect, was repeatedly inscribed on the Pyramid of Menkaure. "But after the statue was found, it seems certain that further excavations may yield an explanation." Zahi Hawass, ever energetic and optimistic, hopes that workers may also be lucky enough to chance upon pieces of the solar boat of Menkaure around the pyramid for, unlike the other two pyramids, none have yet been found.

Two thirds of Menkaure's pyramid were once covered with a crust of red granite blocks that fell in ancient times. These can still be seen scattered in the area. "We are in the process of registering the current location of these granite blocks and then we shall move them to another area [for storage]. A photogramatic map, which shows specific details of the pyramid's stones, will help us relocate them to their original positions," said Hawass.

Note: The Great Pyramid of Khufu will be closed during the Muslim feast of Bairam.

Practical information:

Entry fee to Giza Plateau including the second and third pyramids and the Sphinx: LE20
Kufu's pyramid: LE20
Solar boat: LE20
Admission between 8.30am and 4.30pm

EGYPT AIR

Telephone numbers of EGYPT AIR offices in governorates:

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Direct:	5783620
Tanta Office	311750/311780
Zakazik Office:	349829-349830/1

Site tours

Buses

Super Jet, East Delta and West Delta buses operate throughout Egypt.

Super Jet

Super Jet stations are located in Almaza (Heliopolis), Tahrir, Giza, Ramsis Street and Cairo Airport. Buses travel to Alexandria, Port Said, Hurghada and Sinai. Tel. 772-663.

Cairo-Alexandria
Services almost every half hour from 5.30am to 10pm, from Tahrir, then Giza, Almaza and the airport. Tickets LE19 until 9pm; LE21 thereafter; from the airport LE24 until 5pm; LE30 thereafter.
A VIP bus with phone access leaves Almaza at 7.15am. Tickets from Almaza LE28; from the airport LE32 each way.

Cairo-Marsa Matrouh
Services at 7am departure and 7pm return from Almaza and Tahrir Square. Tickets LE36.
Cairo-Sidi Abdel-Rahman
Services at 6.30am, 7am, 8am, 9am and 3.45pm. Tickets LE32
Cairo-Port Said
Services every half hour from 6am to 8am; then 9am, 10am, 3pm, and 4.30pm, from Almaza, then Ramsis Street. Tickets LE15 each way.

Alexandria-Port Said
Service 6.45am, from Ramleh Square in Alexandria. Departs Port Said 3.30pm. Tickets LE22 each way.

Cairo-Hurghada
Services 8am and 2pm, from Tahrir, then Giza and Almaza. Departs Hurghada noon and 5pm. Tickets LE40 until 5pm. LE45 thereafter, both each way.

Alexandria-Hurghada
Service 8pm, from Ramleh Square, Alexandria. Departs Hurghada 2.30pm. Tickets LE60 each way.

Cairo-Sharm El-Sheikh
Service 11pm, from Tahrir, then Almaza. Departs Sharm El-Sheikh 11pm. Tickets LE50 each way.

East Delta Bus Company

Buses travel to North/South Sinai Sinai, Suez and Ismailia. Buses to Ismailia and Suez depart from Qulali (near Ramsis Square), Almaza and Tagnid Square (near Heliopolis). Buses to North and South Sinai depart from the Sinai bus station at Abbassiya Square. Tel. 482-4753.

Cairo-Ismailia
Services every 45 minutes from 6.30am to 6pm, from Qulali, then Almaza and Tagnid Square. Tickets deluxe bus LE5.75; air-conditioned bus LE5.25, one way.

Cairo-Suez
Services every half hour from 6am to 7pm, from Qulali, then Almaza and Tagnid Square. Tickets deluxe bus LE5.75; air-conditioned bus LE5, one way.

Cairo-El-Arish
Services every hour from 7.30am to 4pm, from Qulali, then Almaza and Tagnid Square. Tickets deluxe bus LE21; air-conditioned bus LE13, one way.

Cairo-Sharm El-Sheikh
Services every 45 min. from 7am to 6.30pm from Abbassiya, then Almaza. Tickets morning LE27; evening LE40, one way.

Cairo-Nuweiba
Service 8am, from Abbassiya, then Almaza. Tickets deluxe bus LE31.

West Delta Bus Company

Stations at Tahrir and Almaza. Tel. 243-1846.

Cairo-Hurghada
Services 9am, noon, 3pm, 10.30pm, 10.45pm and 11pm. Tickets LE30 one way.

Cairo-Safaga
Services 9am and 3pm. Tickets LE35 one way.

Cairo-Qusseir
Service 10pm. Tickets LE38 one way.

Cairo-Luxor
Service 9am. Tickets LE35 one way.

Cairo-Aswan
Service 5pm. Tickets LE50 one way.

Trains

Trains run to Alexandria, Port Said, Luxor and Aswan, from Ramsis Station. Tel. 147 or 575-3555.

Cairo-Luxor-Aswan
"French" deluxe trains with sleepers
Services to Luxor and Aswan 7.40pm and 9pm (reaching Luxor 6.40 am and 8am, Aswan 8.40am and 10am).
Tickets to Luxor LE294 for foreigners and LE129 for Egyptians, to Aswan LE300 for foreigners; LE141 for Egyptians.
"Spanish" deluxe trains without sleepers
Services to Luxor and Aswan 6.45pm, 8.45pm and 9.45pm. Tickets to Luxor: first class LE51; second class LE31. Tickets to Aswan: first class LE63; second class LE37.

Cairo-Alexandria
"Torbini" trains
VIP train: Service 8am. Tickets first class LE32 with a meal; LE22 without a meal.
Standard trains: Services 9am, 11am, noon, 5pm and 7pm. Tickets first class LE22; second class LE17.
"French" trains
Services hourly from 6am to 10.30pm. Tickets first class LE20; second class LE12.

Cairo-Port Said
Services 6.20am and 8.45am. Tickets first class LE45; second class LE26.

EgyptAir

There are between two and five domestic flights daily. Check EgyptAir: Adly 390-0999; Opera 390-2444; or Hilton 772410

Cairo-Aswan
Tickets LE351 for Egyptians, LE1143 for foreigners, both round-trip.

Cairo-Luxor
Tickets LE259 for Egyptians, LE829 for foreigners, both round-trip.

Cairo-Hurghada
Tickets LE279 for Egyptians, LE898 for foreigners, both round-trip.

Cairo-Sharm El-Sheikh
Tickets LE287 for Egyptians, LE945 for foreigners, both round-trip.

Egyptian tourism on the Internet

Here are some useful addresses on the Internet, including tourism magazines, archaeology and travel agency programmes:

http://www.idsc.gov.eg/links.htm is an address through which you can access other useful tourism addresses on the Internet. Here they are:

http://www.idsc.gov.eg/tourism is the address of Egypt's Tourism Net which provides directories of Egypt's hotels, restaurants, cruise lines, travel agents, transportation companies and tourist attractions.
Egypt's tourism net is a part of many home pages (culture, health, environment, etc) created by the IDSC as a part of the nation's Information Highway.

http://163.121.10.41/tourism is the key to Egypt Has it All, where Egypt's tourist sites, such as the Red Sea, Cairo, Luxor, Aswan, the Sinai, Alexandria, oases and ETA offices abroad are described. The magazine also contains colour photographs of Egypt.

http://www.memphis.edu/egypt/egypt.htm is the address of the University of Memphis, and describes their projects in Egypt.

http://www-ecg.ecg.vive.edu/~haggag/travel.html is the address of Egypt's Tours and Travel, which organises packages for people who want to take quality tours. It is an Egyptian tour operator, which specialises in tours within Egypt, the Holy Land and the Middle East.

http://www.geocities.com/TheTropics/7210 is the address of The Curse of the Pharaohs. It includes photographs of ancient tombs and temples.

http://www.ezy.be/horses is the address of The Arabian Horse Worldwide Guide. This guide aims to promote the world's most beautiful and versatile horse -- the Arabian.

http://interoz.com/egypt is a 2,000-page magazine, published by the Ministry of Tourism, where all Egyptian tourist sites are listed and described.

http://watt.seas.virginia.EDU/~oaa5u/city is the address of the magazine Cairo Scene, Cairo's first on-line art and entertainment guide. It is the most up-to-date source on where to go and what to do in Cairo. It has also sections for books and the latest CD's besides proposed places to visit like Wadi Rayyan.
http://watt.seas.virginia.EDU/~oaa5u is the site of Exodus Egypt, a daily site covering home news including political, social and cultural events.

Compiled by **Rehab Saad**

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One team's loss...



EVEN before the football league competition has drawn to a close, Ahli fans have begun celebrating winning the league championship title. Although the matches are not over, Ahli fans seem convinced that their team will win, largely due to Zamalek's humiliating 1-3 loss to the Canal, a team which ranks at the bottom of the pack. The Canal's win, however, has substantially raised its standing in the competition.

For Zamalek, the former league champions, the outlook is grim. After leading the league and placing an 11-point gap between them and arch-rival, Ahli, the team lost its lead in five consecutive matches. This has pushed Ahli to the pole position in the league tournament. Although tied with Zamalek in terms of points (43 each), it boasts a five-goal edge.

So far, each team has played 20 matches. Two matches, which were postponed, are scheduled to be played after the national team goes up against Namibia in the World Cup qualification round on 26 April.

Zamalek's defeat was followed by protests outside the club's gates. The fans, who at times became violent, prevented the members of the club from either entering or leaving the premises. Police intervened to bring the situation under control.

(photo: Amr Gamal)

Blame it on the food

Egypt's young tennis players in the 20th African Juniors Championship in Dakar finished third and blamed the bad food. Nashwa Abdel-Tawab reports

The results of the 20th African Junior Tennis Championship, which took place last week in Dakar, Senegal, points to the disturbing fact that Egypt's young tennis players are on the decline compared to their African counterparts.

During this tournament, held in Egypt for two consecutive years before being moved to Senegal, South Africa came first with 58 points and Morocco moved from third to second with 57 points. Egypt, which had won the 18th African Juniors Championship two years ago, finished third with 56 points in this singles and doubles tournament which brought together male and female players from 32 African countries.

Although the Egyptian delegation fielded some strong competitors, the overall performances were disappointing in part, claim members of the delegation, because of a lack of mineral water and wholesome food as well as the poor condition of the courts.

Out of the lot, it was Mohamed Ma'moun's 3-1 victory over South Africa's En Jaco Vowesthuiz in the under-16 category that stood out for the Egyptian squad. Ma'moun, who is ranked number 229 in the world, was the winner of the under-14 event in the 18th African championship. His win in this year's competition has assured him a ticket to the World Championships of Youth Under-16 that will be held next September in Germany.

In the under-18 category, Sherif Zaher, ranked number 46, and Marawan Zewar, ranked 89, competed. While both men reached the semi-finals, Zaher lost the match 2-3 to Morocco's Mehdi Belbacha after a fast-paced tie-breaker in the final set. Zewar, who went up against the Côte d'Ivoire's champion, Valentin Sanon, lost the match 1-2. Zewar was the African champion in last year's under-16 event. Both the Egyptian players have been living in the US for the past two years and have had access to the best trainers and coaches. It didn't seem to help them much against their African adversaries. In the overall tournament standings, Zaher took third place while Zewar finished fourth.

The women seemed to fare better than their male teammates. Winning the doubles event for the first time, both Yomna Farid and Dalia Qatari won first place in the under-14 category. Farid also won fifth in the singles event.

According to Khaled Abdel-Aziz, the head of the Egyptian delegation to the championship, "The drop in performance was due to some technical problems and bad luck, as well as a lack of funding for the organisation."

Maradona back in hospital

ARGENTINA'S football star, Diego Maradona, was in hospital again last Friday just days after being rushed to a clinic because of falling ill on a Chilean television chat show. An official at the exclusive Buenos Aires hospital where Maradona is being treated said the controversial football star was not seriously ill, but was just undergoing a check-up.

Previously, Argentina's 1986 World Cup-winning captain broke out in a cold sweat on a similar show after dancing the tango with former Miss Universe Cecilia Blocco. He was taken to hospital and diagnosed with high blood pressure.

Beijing's new sensation

A 15-YEAR-old Beijing-born schoolgirl could well become the new sensation at the 13th Commonwealth Table Tennis Championships. The tournament, which is currently taking place in Glasgow, attracted teams from 17 nations.

Li Jia Wei, who is seeded second in the women's singles competition, stands an excellent chance of becoming the youngest player ever to win the Commonwealth title, say pundits. The young Chinese star is climbing the ranks quickly, moving from number 56 just months ago to take the number seven slot from China's Wang Nan in the Asian Championship in Singapore.

Friendly matches

BAHRAIN'S national junior football team will arrive in Cairo on 20 April for two friendly matches against its Egyptian counterpart. The matches are considered to be a serious preparatory step for the Egyptian team before it heads to Botswana in May for the African Nations Cup.

Mohamed Ali, the national junior team's coach, said the matches against Bahrain, coupled with the league matches it has played, will help ensure that the players are in top form for next month's continental championship.

Marathon best

ANTONIO Pinto of Portugal won the London marathon in a personal best time of 2:07.56. Finishing one second behind him was Italy's Stefano Baldini and in third was Olympic Champion Josiah Thugwane of South Africa.

The women's title went to Kenya's Joyce Chepchumba, who clocked in at 2:26.51, to beat pre-race favourite Liz McCilgan in a dramatic sprint to the finish line, according to the French news agency AFP.

Karate postponement

THE AFRICAN Karate Federation decided to postpone the men's African Karate Championship that was slated to be held in Kenya from 24-29 April. The new date will be in April 1998.

The Egyptian national karate team will go to a closed camp this month in preparation for the Arab Games that will be held in Beirut next July.

Wrestling announcement

EGYPT will participate in the African Graeco-Roman Wrestling Championship that will be held in Senegal from 28 April to 2 May. Ahmed El-Biheiry, the Egyptian Wrestling Federation's representative, said that names of the participating players, who were selected from the ranks of the national team, will not be announced until the last minute. An early announcement of the participating players, he said, would discourage the rest of the team prompting them not to take the training sessions seriously.

After the African Championship, the players will undergo an intensive training programme in preparation for the June Mediterranean Games in Italy. They will then head off to the World Junior Championships in Finland next September.

Swimming medals

EGYPT'S national swimming team won four medals in the Junior European Championship, which was held in Italy recently. In the 100 metre back-stroke, Ahmed Mostafa won the gold medal, finishing the race in 1.52 minutes. In the 200-metre freestyle, Hany El-Tair won first place.

El-Tair also won the bronze medal in the 400-metre free-style race, and Ahmed Hani won the bronze in the 200-metre free-style race.

Final sprint

FREDERIC Guesdon of France was the surprise winner of last week's Paris-Roubaix race. Guesdon won the final sprint, coming from the outside of a small group of better known riders, including two race winners of the last three years.

Belgium's Johan Museuw, the defending champion and current world champion, had two flats in the last 40km that cost him time. However, he came back to finish third. Belgian Jo Planckaert was second and Andrei Tchmil of Russia was fourth.

Edited by **Inas Mazhar**

Money & Business

Egyptian trade fairs to increase

THE GERMAN Technical Assistance Organisation has approved the request of the Egyptian Commercial Representation Office in Bonn to increase the number of Egyptian fairs in Germany to three. The office is also seeking to increase the technical assistance provided by German experts in order to upgrade the quality of Egyptian industries. Trade El-Sharqawi Henefi, the technical head of the representation office, said that that the office is currently conducting contacts to encourage German participation in the Cairo export exhibition, to be held from 18-24 October.

New companies established

THE COMPANIES' Committee at the Ministry of Economy, headed by Ahmed Fouad Atta, first under-secretary to the minister of economy, approved the establishment of 37 companies with licensed capital of LE899.5 million and issued capital of LE73 million.

Eighteen of these companies are located in Cairo, eight in Giza and two others in Alexandria. The rest will be established at El-Quseir, Qena, 6th of October City, Beni Suef, El-Obour, Badr City, Sharm El-Sheikh and 10th of Ramadan City.

Faisal Islamic Bank increases financial activities

FAISAL Islamic Bank of Egypt has taken an active role in boosting the production sector of the Egyptian economy. In this respect, the bank has financed numerous units within these sectors, with the aim of providing them with equipment, land, building and material needs. The number of investment operations carried out by the bank until the end of the third quarter of 1417AH (the start of February 1997) increased to 63 in number. Likewise, the bank's advance financing through these operations reached LE4 billion, more than 65 per cent of which took place in developing vital fields such as agriculture, industry, pharmaceuticals, medical equipment and real estate. Thirty-five per cent of this financing found its way into commercial operations, such as the manufacture of strategic goods, spare parts and materials.

However, the role of Faisal Islamic Bank of Egypt in boosting development operations to revitalise the Egyptian economy does not end there. Beyond this main goal lies another, which is aimed at establishing and holding shares in a variety of companies. Currently the bank's companies number 36, covering many facets of economic activity. Total capitals for these companies reached LE1.6 billion, whereby the bank's share reached some 2.2 million. On the other hand, the number of companies established by the bank in the Egyptian market reached 28, providing more than 8,500 job opportunities.

In addition to the companies it has established, Faisal Islamic Bank is also keen to hold shares in other companies with a total sum of LE400 million invested in such companies.

Some companies owned by Faisal Islamic Bank which operate within Egypt include: The Islamic Company for Engineering Industries (Vidco) in 10th of Ramadan City; The Islamic Company for Racking Materials (Eco-Pack) in 6th of October City; The Islamic Company for Floor Materials (Rickett Egypt) in 6th of October City; The Giza Company for Paint and Chemical Industries, also in 6th of October City; The Islamic Company for Land Planning in Burg Al-Arab City; The Modern National Company for Wood Industries, also in Burg Al-Arab; The Islamic Company for Animal Wealth in Al-Qanatar Al-Kheiriya; The National Ismailiya Company for Foodstuffs (FoodCo) in Ferdan, Ismailiya; The Giza Company for Agricultural Industries and Land Reclamation at Zawia Abu Muslim, Abu Nimrus, Giza; Egypt International Hospital in Dokki; Cairo Specialised Hospital in Heliopolis; Mansoura Medical Centre in Mansouriya, Daqhaliya Governorate, Mona Child Care Centre in Giza; The Islamic Company for Foreign Commerce and Trade, also in Giza, and finally, the International Import and Export Company in Cairo.

Faisal Islamic Bank's policy towards establishing new companies is that the bank provides the necessary financing and support until the company is able to stand on its own two feet. After that, the bank tries to sell its shares in the companies to a major investor or through the stock exchange, making it possible for the bank to establish additional new companies with the aim of increasing commercial development and boosting the Egyptian economic market. Some of the bank's companies have achieved remarkable success after the bank's sale of its shares, indicating their high investment value. Among such companies are: The Islamic Company for Acrylic Products in 10th of Ramadan City; Siltel Company, also in 10th of Ramadan City; The Islamic Company for Pharmaceuticals (PharCo) in Ameriya, Alexandria and 10th of Ramadan Co for Pharmaceuticals in 6th of October City.

Last but not least, the building and construction sector is of special interest to Faisal Islamic Bank of Egypt, which is keen to share in alleviating the housing crisis. Within the framework of economic development and social development in compliance with the wishes of the public, the bank shares in developing the building sector through providing financing for materials and equipment that construction companies need to operate according to international standards. The bank works actively in this sector, the end result being that through its efforts, some 18,000 housing units throughout the country have been constructed.



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Environmental law's grace period to end next February

THE EGYPTIAN Environmental Affairs Authority (EAA) conducted a symposium to discuss the effects of industrial pollution in Egypt and steps being taken to oppose it, just as the legal grace period of a new law draws to a close.

Selah Hafez, executive director of the EAA said that Environmental Law 4/1994, aimed at combating industrial pollution, has a grace period of 3 years before it goes into effect. The possibility of extending this grace period for 2 more years is contingent upon parliamentary approval.

This new law was drawn up for two reasons, one as part of the national plan to deal with environmental problems, and second, to introducing legislation that would have far-reaching effects on the socio-economic level.

Hafez added that the grace period given to industrial organisations will end next February. Industrial organisations wishing to increase this grace period have until August 1997 to do so, provided that they submit a draft plan to meet environmental standards set forth by the EAA.

Dr Magi Allam, public relations manager for the EAA, said this additional grace period is intended for those industrial organisations which are making serious efforts towards adhering to the law. As for companies which have not taken any steps towards improving their pollution control, the law will be applied to them immediately, and they will not be entitled to a further grace period.

Union of Arab Banks receives membership

THE ECONOMIC and Social Council of the Arab League has decided to include the Union of Arab Banks as an advisory member of the Council. The Economic and Social Council is comprised of 22 countries in addition to a number of federations which play a major role in the Arab arena of events.

This decision comes at a time when the Union of Arab Banks is boosting economic development projects in the Arab world and solidifying the role of Arab financial organisations and major economic institutions to unify Arab efforts in realising a solid economic position. Mahmoud Abdel-Aziz, chairman of the board of the National Bank of Egypt and a leading figure in the banking field, stated that the Union has recently become a member of the United Nations Economic and Social Committee, advising the committee on Arab developments in finance and banking.

photo: Randa Shaath

Daoud Abdel-Sayed: Final cut

As the credits roll and the lights come up, the spectators rub their eyes and look at one another, puzzled or elated or angry. And somewhere, he is looking out over the city: looking, perhaps, for another Sayed Marzouq, or maybe a land of dreams

In the past few decades, Egyptian cinema has offered little food for thought. In completely predictable scenarios, strongly stereotyped protagonists usually cavort with a more than obvious aim at social satire. The result is the awkward presentation of an unsubtle caricature of what the film producers and directors clearly deem to be today's social, moral, political or economic ills. The message is hammered repeatedly into the mind of a spectator who, more often than not, is much more taken with the undulating antics of the ubiquitous belly dancer than with the predictable, holier-than-thou punch line.

It is not surprising, therefore, that the censors have had more than one bone to pick with Daoud Abdel-Sayed's oeuvre. There is nothing predictable in his work, which, moreover, as he confirms himself one sunny afternoon on his balcony overlooking Korba in Heliopolis, over cups of coffee he has prepared himself, contains no messages, moral or otherwise.

His films spell out his personal philosophy no more than his elegantly sophisticated living room, visible from the balcony, reveals the personality of this highly original film director. The apartment was decorated by Onsi Abu Seif, famous for his film sets. It bespeaks order and a love for warm colours and materials, and is certainly informed by a professional knowledge of harmonious melanges of styles.

"The censor judges a film according to a number of fixed criteria which are not always applicable to my work," says Daoud Abdel-Sayed, picking up where he left off, after a short interlude during which a discussion on the use of old wrought iron to decorate banisters had detracted him momentarily from the topic at hand. His film *El-Kitkat*, inspired by Ibrahim Aslan's *El-Malek El-Hazin* ("The Heron") was held for six months by the censorship. Was it because he had introduced a taboo topic — sexual impotence? Abdel-Sayed doesn't think so. Impotence was not central to the plot, it was just symbolic, he explains. His problems with the powers that rule over film releases do not unduly worry him, however. He is only concerned with what he has to say and how to say it well. Consequently, when Abdel-Sayed finds nothing worth saying, he simply keeps quiet. He did just that for 18 years after graduating from the Cinema Institute in June 1967, accepting work as an assistant director and producing a couple of documentaries but refraining from embarking, unlike many other young directors of his age, on a project all his own.

The climate of the period in which he emerged as a young man was one of great pessimism. The national dream had come to an end and there was little hope on the horizon for his generation as a whole. The question was, should they abandon ship, build different lives, adopt different identities and allegiances? If they stayed, was there a role for them to play? Abdel-Sayed chose to stay, but kept his peace.

Born in Cairo in 1946 into an affluent bourgeois family, he had a traditional childhood for his milieu, with literature as his main interest. He liked movies no more or less than did other youngsters his age, whose experience with the big screen was probably limited to a weekly outing with the family. He admits that, in those days, he went to the cinema for entertainment and never mulled over the intricacies of film-making. His passion was kindled quite by chance. Accompanying a relative to Studio Galal, he had become suddenly fascinated by the director's movements. He came out convinced that he had found what he wanted to do, and later enrolled at the Cinema Institute.

During the 18 years that separated his graduation from his first film, which he not only directed but of which he wrote the screenplay, he read, observed, worked as an assistant director and acquired experience by producing documentaries which earned him a degree of recognition. Finally he was ready. The mood of defeat had been subsumed, or buried, by the effects of the open door policy. "I felt there were things I now wanted to express, and I tried to do so as simply as possible. My first film *El-Sa'alik* ("The Vagabonds") was not a critique of the open-door policy, or a condemnation of a certain way of behaving, as many were led to believe. In the film, Nour El-Sherif finds himself forced to kill his friend (Mahmoud Abdel-Aziz), but he does so with a great deal of sorrow. If there is condemnation at all, it is directed against an entire social class rather than against a particular fact or an individual's actions. Nour El-Sherif kills in order to defend his position within his class. I did not intend to dwell on the particulars of my protagonists, psychological problems; rather, I attempted to portray the effects certain social and economic conditions have on certain types of personalities."

For *El-Sa'alik* he closely observed three "fat cats". They had started out as *Sa'aliq* and had climbed the social ladder thanks to the *Infitah*. "By watching them, I could naturally oppose their behaviour and attitudes to those of a bourgeoisie or an aristocracy born to their social condition; but this did not mean that I found the *Sa'aliq* inherently evil."

El-Bahth 'An Sayed Marzouq ("The Search for Sayed Marzouq"), which mystified many cinema-goers with its choppy plot and Kafkaesque overtones, is again the description of the interaction of characters, placed in a set of circumstances, limited in time and place — a slice of life (but whose?), during which Abdel-Sayed offers the spectator a knowledgeable glimpse into the human mechanisms at play in a *fait divers*. He is, one could say, a director's director, offering neither praise nor condemnation as a thread through the labyrinth.

In this respect at least, his films are a little like him. Daoud Abdel-Sayed is something of a wild card. He does not talk much, and certainly not about himself. Beyond the bare biographics, he clams up. He would much rather talk about books or films or — well, anything, really; but he is the antithesis of the platform-happy intellectual, desperate to hawk his personal views on life and the universe, tossing another grain of sand into the already ideology-laden machine. Even his reluctance to fit into a pre-conceived category defies definition: he is neither a recluse, nor a half-mad genius. Is he being disingenuous, one wonders? Or merely himself? Is his work that of telling the story seen by a casual bystander, developing the details of the wild-goose chase — an informed, but ever-so-sober narrator?

Although his work is technically sophisticated and informed by a respect of classical literary rules, Abdel-Sayed denies that his intention is to develop a more intellectual slant in film-making. He also rejects the idea that his work is by definition elitist. "I do not want to make strictly Egyptian films, which will only be appreciated by an Egyptian public. I would like them to address universal feelings and concerns. Let us say that a 'good' film should be exportable anywhere in the world and be equally appreciated by international audiences. Art is never only indigenous," he insists. In his films, he is just telling a story which has struck him as worth being told and he believes that he can present it in such a way as to generate general interest.

Yet in *Ard El-Ahlam* ("Land of Dreams"), maybe his least successful film commercially, has he not set out to defend the right of Egyptian women to a personal life, separate of that of their families and their needs?

Far from it, says Abdel-Sayed. "I do believe that a woman, like any other human being, incidentally, has a right to a life of her own, but this was not my primary concern in making the film. I was telling the story of a particular woman who found herself at a crossroads in her life and had to make choices. I tried to describe what she went through making up her mind, in view of her particular circumstances. This can happen to women every day in any country. Do not derive from the film that I am a champion of women's rights with an emphasis on Egyptian women, or conversely a detractor of such rights. I am an observer and a story-teller first and foremost and that is all I hope people will read in my films."

Although Abdel-Sayed does write screenplays, two of his more popular films, *El-Kitkat* and his most recent, *Sareq El-Farah* ("Stolen Joys"), have been inspired by the work of others. *El-Kitkat* is an adaptation of *El-Malek El-Hazin* by Ibrahim Aslan and *Sareq El-Farah* is a novel written by Khairi Shalabi. Abdel-Sayed just liked the stories and figured he could adapt them to his own rules: simplicity of plot and observation of the characters during a specific period of time. "The technique is different, of course," he says, "because the framework within which the director can move has been set by another. I have to remain faithful to the spirit of the author, but I do not mind the discipline so long as I feel that the work will make a good film by my standards."

He has asked all the questions as to the role he wanted to play and has found a few answers which apply, at least, to what he expects of his own work. Art is art, not a tool subordinated to a moral, political or social purpose. He wants his work's appeal to stem from its intrinsic artistic value, not from the message it purports to deliver. On the other hand, he never aspired to becoming the misunderstood artist. "I did not want to play to an empty theatre," he says. Could he not produce a work that would interest and please while avoiding vulgarly predictable, commercial clichés? Could he not satisfy, at the same time, himself and the public? This was the challenge he set for himself, from the very beginning. "Difficult," he says "but not impossible". Today, with hindsight and four award-winning films to his credit, he can safely venture to say that he has managed to have his cake and eat it too. "The Egyptian public is particular in so far as it is not necessarily visible. There are those who go to movie theatres and are easy to account for; but there are also those who prefer watching a video in the comfort of their homes, and there is no telling how many there are, so I do not judge my success in reaching people by box office results alone. I am confident at this point that my films have left their mark on those who have seen them. His plans for the future? "I am looking into a couple of things," says El-Sayed. "I am not very prolific, you know..." It does not seem to bother him much.

Filmography

1967: Graduates from the Cinema Institute

1968-1973: Assistant director to Kamal El-Sheikh, in *El-Ragul Alladhi Faqada Dhillahu* ("The Man Who Lost His Shadow"), Youssef Chahine in *El-Ard* ("The Land") and Mamdouh Shukri in *Awham Hubb* (Illusions of Love)

1972: First documentary, *Raqsa min El-Buhaira* ("A dance from the Lake")

1976: Second documentary, *Wassiyet Ragul Hakim* ("Testament of a Wise Man")

1977: Testament of a Wise Man receives the Jury's Award at the National Festival of Short Films and Documentaries, the award of the Film Association and the award of the Organisation of Writers and Cinema Critics, as well as a certificate of merit at the East German Operahausen Festival

1985: *El-Sa'alik* (the Vagabonds) with Nour El-Sherif and Mahmoud Abdel-Aziz

1991: *El-Bahth An Sayed Marzuq* ("The Search for Sayed Marzouq") with Nour El-Sherif, which wins the Silver Pyramid from the Cairo International Film Festival

1991: *El-Kitkat* with Mahmoud Abdel-Aziz, which won the Golden Award at the Damascus film Festival and First Prize at the Third National Festival of Narrative Films

1993: *Ard El-Ahlam* ("Land of Dreams") with Faten Hamama, which takes second place at the Fourth National Festival of Narrative Films

1995: *Sareq El-Farah* ("Stolen Joys") with Lucy and Maged El-Massri, which wins Third Prize at the Fifth National Festival of Narrative Films

Profile by **Fayza Hassan**

Pack of Cards

by Madame Sosostris

♥ What a beautiful wedding it was, dears, and how much fun was had by all when our photographer **Randa Shaath** married photographer (not ours, unfortunately) **Thomas** (now **Karim**) **Hartwell** on a memmorable April morning. I feel all my poetic harp-strings twanging when I remember, dears...Seeing my dear **Randa** all in pale cream reminded me of little me, not so long ago. The couple arrived in a flower-decked *hantour*, **Randa** resplendent in the morning sun, her face glowing under a veil held by a golden turban, Greek style — I am ordering half a dozen of those, they are so becoming, really, although mine will have a bit more of the Aladdin look. The guests were then treated to a Palestinian *zaffa* on their way to the boat which was ready to promenade the party up and down the Nile until sunset. Well dears, I am sorry you could not all attend the **Shaath** family's musical performance, in which they announced in verse that the happy couple would honeymoon on a deserted island. I am not at liberty to tell you which, but I can reveal that it is not **Giligan's**

♣ And suddenly dears everyone is getting married on boats. It is catching like wild fire. We no longer can wish the happy couple a long and prosperous life without the swishing of small waves below. In the new tradition, lovely **Heba Saleh**, BBC correspondent to North Africa and daughter of our colleague **Nahed El-Gamal** and renown accountant **Magdi Kamel Saleh**, held the wedding reception on the Nile Maxim, after duly marriying writer and consultant on North Africa **Hugh T Roberts** at All Saints Cathedral. And dears, do you know what I took home with me after dancing the night away? A bonbonnière designed by artist **Azza Fahmi** who has also designed the wedding invitations. I am hanging on to those, they will be collector's items by the time my grandchildren start gracing my old age.

♠ Hurrah for **Marie Louis**, who timed the unveiling of her spring collection so cleverly — just as the first really hot day of the season was reminding us that it is time to shed those old cardigans. And dears, it is no secret that, when it comes to cool little numbers, **Marie Louis** is an expert.

♦ I don't know about you, my lovelies, but in April and May I really feel like giving my eyes colour indigestion — and, for the more prosaic among you, I don't mean all those fashionable new shadows. You know, in France *les marroniers sont en fleur*, etc...Well since we have no *marroniers* on Qasr El-Nil Street, I quench my thirst for beauty by going to exhibitions, and when that of **Fatma Refaat** and **Moustafa Ahmed** opens on 23 April at Gallery Extra, I will be the first at the door.







Clockwise:
Karim and Randa;
Hugh and Heba;
Marie Louis' Spring Collection

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